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THESIS

**REFORM OF CIVIL-MILITARY RELATION IN
HUNGARY IN CONTEXT OF JOINING NATO**

by

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March 2001

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**REFORM OF CIVIL-MILITARY RELATION IN HUNGARY
IN CONTEXT OF JOINING NATO**

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

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Defense reform in Hungary has followed a difficult path from the Soviet era to NATO accession. This paper suggests how Hungary first adopted the new Defense Law and Basic Security Principles in 1993, and defined the roles of the Armed Forces in the new post-Cold War era. Secondly, by the end of the NATO accession talks in 1998, Hungary transformed not only its own military to comply with NATO standards, but also the command structure and the leadership and management of the Armed Forces. As a consequence of the 1999 Kosovo War the Hungarian government initiated a new, three-phase defense reform concept. The new defense reform sets forth a smaller, better-equipped, sustainable army, capable of carrying out missions, originated in the 1998 Defense Law, the 1998 Basic Security Principles, and international obligations. Due to a broad parliamentary and public consensus and a ten-year process, from 1990 to 2000, Hungary has radically transformed its civil-military relation and established the basis of a Western democratic principle-based, civilian-controlled Armed Forces.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

I.	INTRODUCTION.....	1
A.	PURPOSE.....	1
B.	SIGNIFICANCE	3
C.	METHODOLOGY	4
II.	CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS DURING THE COMMUNIST REGIME (1945-1989).....	5
A.	HISTORICAL BACKGROUND.....	5
B.	CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS UNDER COMMUNIST REGIME	9
C.	SOCIETAL CONDITIONS.....	14
III.	FUNDAMENTAL CHANGES IN CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS (1989- 1994)	17
A.	LEGACY OF THE LAST COMMUNIST GOVERNMENT.....	17
B.	DEEPENING REFORM OF CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS AND THE ARMED FORCES.....	22
IV.	ON THE WAY TO NATO (1994-1998).....	33
A.	STRUCTURAL CHANGES IN THE MINISTRY OF DEFENSE AND THE ARMED FORCES	33
B.	FINANCIAL CONSTRAINTS: AN OBSTACLE TO MODERNIZATION	37
C.	OUNTING PUBLIC AND POLITICAL SUPPORT FOR NATO INTEGRATION.....	42
V.	INSIDE NATO, IN THE WAR AND THE AFTERMATH FOR CIVIL- MILITARY RELATIONS (1998-2000)	47
A.	CHANGES IN POWER AND ESTABLISHING LEGAL BASIS FOR JOINING NATO	47
B.	IN THE KOSOVO WAR	53
C.	THE EFFECT OF DOMESTIC POLITICS ON CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS AFTER KOSOVO.....	58
D.	CONTROVERSIES IN DEFENSE REFORM	64
VI.	CONCLUSION	69
	APPENDIX III.A.1. DEFENSE REFORM IN HUNGARY, 1989-1990.....	73
	APPENDIX III.B.1. DEFENSE REFORM IN HUNGARY, 1992	75
	APPENDIX IV.A.1. STRUCTURE OF THE HUNGARY'S MOD, 1994-1995.....	77
	APPENDIX V.A.1. STRUCTURE OF THE HUNGARY'S MOD IN 1995	79
	APPENDIX V.D.1. STRUCTURE OF THE HUNGARY'S MOD IN 2001	81
	LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	83

BIBLIOGRAPHY	85
INITIAL DISTRIBUTION LIST	89

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure III.B.1. Real GDP Growth in Percentages in Hungary, 1989-1993.	25
Figure III.B.2. Decline in Percentages of the Defense Budget, 1989-1993.....	26
Figure V.B.1. NATO-Controlled Airspace in Hungary During the Kosovo War.	58

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LIST OF TABLES

Table IV.B.1. Defense Budget by Functions in Hungary in Percentages, 1995-1996.	38
Table IV.B.2. Defense Expenditure as a Percentage of GDP, 1992-1995.....	39
Table IV.B.3. Defense Budget by Functions in Percentages, 1995-1996.....	39

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Civil-military relations in Hungary have changed radically in the last decade. The October 1989 Constitution and the 1 December 1989 Defense Reform Concept provided a basic legal framework for reforming civil-military relations. The December 1993 Defense Act made the armed forces directly subordinate to the Ministry of Defense, which has administrative responsibilities over the armed forces, and at the same time this law strengthened the constitutional position of the President, as Commander-in-Chief.

However, the Parliament, particularly, the Parliamentary Defense Committee could have been more effective, playing a decisive role in defense matters. The Legislative branch defines the priorities of defense policy, defense budget, the manning level of the armed forces, the balance between services and the main direction for the development of military technology.

The 1993/CX¹ Defense Act and the 61/2000 National Assembly Resolution define a long-term defense reform, which includes the steps of restructuring the armed forces, simplification of the command and control strata, modernization of training and military technology, and the improvement of work and living conditions of military personnel for the period of 2000-2010.

The integrated Ministry of Defense eliminates those duplications caused by the conflicting tasks of both the Ministry of Defense and the Defense Staff. The Defense Minister's involvement in the direct command structure facilitates the flow of defense

¹ Roman numbers refer to the sequential numbers of State's Law, approved by the Parliament in a given year.

needs from the armed forces to the government, opening defense policy and activities to public scrutiny and accountability and providing more effective oversight of the Hungarian Defense Forces.

With the existence of political and public support to sustain a capable army, the 1999 Strategic Defense Review makes the Defense Forces capable of carrying out tasks set forth in the 1998 amended Defense Act, and meeting military obligations originated in international treaties, especially with North Atlantic Treaty Organization, United Nation and Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

I. INTRODUCTION

A. PURPOSE

The dilemma of the control of the armed forces is confronted not only by the established liberal democracies, but also this issue challenges the democratizing societies of Central and Eastern Europe. The ancient dilemma, "Set quis costudiet ipsos Custodes"¹ has echoed over centuries; however, since the armed forces and society have entered the age of mass politics, total war and its aftermath, the nature of the problem has also changed to highlight the challenges of democratic statehood and security.

The revolutions of 1989-90 in Central and Eastern Europe provided a number of challenges to European security. One of the immediate consequences of these challenges has been the aspiration of approximately 80 million Central Europeans (16.3 million East Germans, 37.8 million Poles, 15.7 million Czechs and Slovaks, and 10.6 million Hungarians) to "return to Europe."² Reflecting this popular will, the new Central European governments have adopted policies designed to join Western European political, economic, and military institutions; the European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). It was additionally in the interest of Europe and the United States that this process be successful. The future complexion of these new states' governments and alliance orientations will also have a profound impact on the security of Central and Western Europe. European institutions are important to Central Europe

¹ But who is to guard the guards themselves? Juvenal, *Omnia Romae*, vi. 347.

² On 25-26 January 1990, during his visit to Hungary and Poland, Czechoslovak's President Havel called on the three countries' cooperative effort to "return to Europe".

because they legitimize the programs of their political leaders to society. However, NATO

is especially important because it anchors the United States to Europe and provides additional psychological security to these states, which have been so tossed about by history. NATO, with its trans-Atlantic ties, is seen not just as an Article 5 guarantee against aggression but as a stabilizing instrument that ensures continued statehood.³

This thesis deals with civil-military reform, in the last ten years, in Hungary to comply with NATO practices, and highlights relevant institutions and societal conditions, which are essential and have been established to support the shared principles of civilian direction of the army in liberal democracies. Through the following issues, such as,

- existence of a clear legal and constitutional framework, defining the basic relationship between the state and armed forces;
- significant role of parliament in legislating on defense and security matters;
- hierarchical responsibility of the military to the government through a civilian organ – ministry of defense – of public organization, which is charged with direction of the military's activity;
- presence of a well trained and experienced professional military that is respected and funded by a civilian authority;
- division of responsibility between civilian and uniformed defense authority in such way that political accountability and military professionalism to be maximized;
- existence of developed civil society with practice and tradition of democratic institution and nationwide consensus on the role and mission of the military;
- presence of strong non-governmental component within the defense community, capable of participating in public debate on defense and security policy;⁴

³ Simon, Jeffrey: NATO Enlargement & Central Europe (Institute For National Strategic Studies, NDU, 1996), p. 5.

⁴ Joó, Rudolf: The Democratic Control of Armed Forces (Institute for Security Studies Western European Union, 1996), p. 6. Also see Simon, Jeffrey: NATO Enlargement & Central Europe (Institute For National Strategic Studies, NDU, 1996), pp. 26-27.

this paper shows that Hungary has reformed its civil-military relations on a democratic basis reflecting not only on its NATO membership, but also on domestic politics, which in turn fits into the model of modern liberal democracies.

B. SIGNIFICANCE

The challenge to the US and Europe posed by the historic processes – liberation of Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries from Soviet primacy, regaining national independence of those countries and, unfortunately, as a side effect, reinforcement of nationalistic movement in some CEE countries, – is not just to accommodate the aspiration of eighty million Central Europeans to re-establish liberal democratic rule and to rediscover their historic heritage, but is also to ensure that the revolutions succeed. This policy is necessary because Central European liberal democracies represent a model – a roadmap – to other Eastern and Southeast European nations and states such as Romania, Bulgaria, Albania and the successor states of Yugoslavia and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), who also seek a return to Europe.

The Hungarian experience of step-by-step reconciliation of civil-military relations after a long period of the Soviet-type regime may help countries aspiring to NATO membership to avoid unnecessary domestic political struggle to establish civil control over the military. Hungary's lesson learned of establishing a civilian-controlled ministry of defense and army⁵, defining national security interests and problems⁶, funding a well-

⁵ "Az 1993. évi CX törvény a honvédelemről," Magyar Közlöny No. 186, Budapest, 24 December, 1993, 4. §.

trained and equipped army capable of carrying out tasks, which are originated in national Defense Law and in commitment to Western Security organizations⁷, and the way of employing domestic political and public support for implementing the above-mentioned task, shows the way from Soviet-ideology dominated “internationalism” to clear national interest articulated in Western Security institutions.

C. METHODOLOGY

The methodology used for this thesis is a case study of the evaluation of civil-military relation in Hungary, based on various phases of Hungarian history after 1989, and the use of scholarly and journalistic sources including primary and secondary sources.⁸

⁶ “Basic Principles of the Security Policy of the Republic of Hungary,” European Security Vol 3, No. 2, (1994), pp. 352-358. See also “Basic Principles of Security Policy of the Republic of Hungary,” 94/1998 OGY Hatarozat, Budapest, 28 December 1998.

⁷ “Basic Principles of Security Policy of the Republic of Hungary,” 94/1998 OGY Hatarozat, Budapest, 28 December 1998.

⁸ See Bibliography.

II. CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS DURING THE COMMUNIST REGIME (1945-1989)

A. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Hungary was an isolated but influential linguistic and cultural island within the Habsburg Empire and managed to gain a semblance of autonomy from Habsburg rule after the 1867 *Ausgleich* (compromise), which created the Austro-Hungarian Dual Monarchy.

The Hungarian Army reflected the societal condition of the entire Habsburg Empire. “An Army officer career depended on his social origin, the ability to purchase place in regiment and the goodwill of [a] regimental protégée. By the eve of the World War I noble birth advantage and purchase of position had been eliminated and ability and durability in service became key to success.”⁹ Yet, representation of army officers in the Hungarian, national, Army and Joint Army showed that only an educated, mostly Roman Catholic elite got officers’ promotion. Under-representation of nationalities (Serbs, Romanians, Ruthens) was explained by their other – Eastern - Confession and relatively small size of educated elites.¹⁰

As successor to the Danubian Monarchy after World War I, “Principal Allied and Associated Powers” considered Hungary as one of the powers responsible for the war.

⁹ Deák, István: Beyond Nationalism A Societal and Political History of the Habsburg Officer Corps 1848-1918 (Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 167.

¹⁰ Deák, István: Beyond Nationalism A Societal and Political History of the Habsburg Officer Corps 1848-1918 (Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 171, 185.

After World War I, as a result of the unfair Treaty of Trianon, Hungary was reduced in size and population; the country lost 72 percent of its original territory and 64 percent of its population, including originally Slovak, Romanian and Serb-speaking nationalities. By the Trianon Treaty, Transylvania was given to Romania, Croatia-Slavonia to Yugoslavia, Banat to Romania and Yugoslavia, and Slovakia and Carpato-Ukraine to Czechoslovakia.¹¹

Hungary's efforts to develop democratic institutions in the interwar period also met a similar fate as the rest of Central Europe. The 1918 "Autumn Revolution" led by the then Prime Minister Mihály Károlyi, established a republic. Nonetheless, because of lack of public support and baseless promises of the new government, the republic was discarded by Béla Kun's proletarian revolution¹² on March 21 1919. After the Hungarian "Red Army" invaded Czechoslovakia, Romania, – as a member of Entente (a military alliance, originated in 1892 between France and Russia, to which Romania joined on 17 August 1916), – for helping the Czechs occupied the Hungarian capital, although, Czechoslovakia formally joined the "Small Entente" (a military alliance between Czechoslovakia, Romania and the Serb-Croat-Slovenian Kingdom) only in 1921. The Great Powers demanded the invaders, both Hungary and Romania, to evacuate the occupied territories, after which Hungary ended up in Admiral Miklós Horthy's dictatorship.¹³

The Hungarian Army of the interwar period can be seen as a logical continuation of the prewar Army. The officer corps had strong German orientation, moreover, many

¹¹ "Treaty of Peace Between The Allied and Associated Powers and Hungary", Part II, Article 27, available from www.lib.byu.edu/~rdh/wwI/tri1.html.

¹² www.c3.hu/scripta/beszelo/98/11/081979.htm.

¹³ Van den Doel, Theo: Central Europe: The New Allies? (Westview Press, 1994), p. 27.

Hungarian officers were of German origin.¹⁴ Officers had been trained either at the Budapest Ludovica Academy or at the War College in Vienna.¹⁵ Pro-German orientation, however, in interwar period was based on Hungarian revisionism, rather than on inherited traditions.¹⁶ Prestige of the Army declined after 1918 due to different factors: the pay was poor, the Army reduced in size, a proportion of non-noble, non-gentry officers rose, and a large sector of officers' corps came to consist of national minorities. The general public's disbelief and distrust toward the Army, due to the loss of war and territories, amplified the loss of prestige.¹⁷

During World War II Hungary participated on the side of the Axis powers in hopes of recovering the former Hungarian territories. As a reward for joining the Axis, Hungary received back Transylvania, part of Croatia and Serbia, and part of Upper Hungary (part of Slovakia). Yet, since Hungary, again, was on the side of the defeated, its Trianon-mandated borders remained unchanged by the second Paris Peace Treaty of 1947.¹⁸ The Treaty also provided the Soviet Union with the possibility of stationing military units in the territory of Hungary to support Soviet troops in Austria.

After World War II the Soviets decapitated the Hungarian Army. The Russians eliminated prewar officers from the Hungarian Army, because they viewed the Hungarian officer corps as pro-German oriented. Another reason why officers were eliminated was their class origin. Interwar and World War II Army leaders were members of Hungarian gentry families, such as Generals Lajos Veres, Béla Miklós Dálnoki, Gábor Faragó and

¹⁴ Ithiel de Sola Pool: Satellite Generals (Stanford University Press, 1955), p. 96.

¹⁵ Király Béla, Walter Scott Dilalrd ed: War and Society in Eastern and Central Europe Vol. XXIV. (Columbia University Press, 1988), p. 150.

¹⁶ Ithiel de Sola Pool: Satellite Generals (Stanford University Press, 1955), p. 96.

¹⁷ Ibid: p. 115.

¹⁸ "Peace Treaty of Paris", Article 4, available from www.ifi.savba.sk/ext/smr/paris.html.

others.¹⁹ After the war, in 1947 Hungary became a republic again, but the Communist takeover in 1949 terminated Hungary's newly acquired independence.

The Austrian State Treaty of 1955 would have ceased the legitimacy of the presence of Soviet troops in Hungary. However, the foundation of the Warsaw Pact in 1955, with the existence of Soviet troops²⁰ on the Hungarian soil, did not give Hungary any choice but to become a member of the Warsaw Pact. The decision to enter the Warsaw Pact was also affected by the fact that the then Hungarian government was Soviet-oriented (Mátyás Rákosi, a Soviet indoctrinated Communist was the Communist Party's leader, and Ernő Gerő, another orthodox Communist was Prime Minister), and Hungarian Army's leadership was also Soviet-committed. Furthermore, the Army did not have "national independence", since in reality every Hungarian military unit was commanded by a Soviet "counselor".²¹

Hungary's effort to revolt in 1956 was thwarted by Soviet invasion. In rejecting this form of Soviet indoctrination, during the Revolution, "the Hungarian Army either joined the revolutionists or remained intact"²², putting the reputation of the military high among the population. The repression of the revolution by the Soviet military resulted in an agreement between Hungary and the Soviet Union in May 1957. The agreement stipulated, "...Soviet military units would stay in Hungary for as long as the NATO Treaty remained in force."²³

¹⁹ Ithiel de Sola Pool: Satellite Generals (Stanford University Press, 1955), p. 98.

²⁰ Until 1995 20,000 Soviet troops were stationed in Hungary. After signing the Austrian State Treaty, Soviet troops were transferred from Austria to Hungary and composed of 80,000. See Barany, D. Zoltan: Soldier and Politics in Eastern Europe, 1945-90 (New York: St. Martin Press, 1993), pp. 58.

²¹ Barany, D. Zoltan: Soldier and Politics in Eastern Europe, 1945-90 (New York: St. Martin Press, 1993), pp. 47-48.

²² Király Béla: Facts on Hungary (New York: 1957), p. 54.

²³ Van den Doel, Theo: Central Europe: The New Allies? (Westview Press, 1994), p. 29.

With its “velvet” revolution in 1989, Hungary, too, began its liberal democratic experiment for the third time this century dismantling the model of a Soviet civil-military system and the unhappy legacy of the 20th century.

B. CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS UNDER COMMUNIST REGIME

Communist Party leadership provided neither democratic nor civilian control of the armed forces. It did not exercise democratic control, because the Communist Party’s institutions and mechanisms lacked the basic principles of democratic control and accountability. The leading Party’s organs were not democratically elected; the system was based on the cooption from the top.

In such conditions, the parliament, as the highest political organ, was only a facade. The whole political environment “lacked transparency, political responsibility and accountability.”²⁴ Like society, “the armed forces’ institutions were dominated by one-party authority that had no legitimacy or democratic mandate in the eyes of the overwhelming majority of the public.”²⁵

In the 1980s, in the period of the “melting” of the Communist regime, Hungary moved from the totalitarian model to, at least, a limited open society. However, despite societal changes, civil-military relations remained untouched and did not modify the nature of Communist Party control of the Army. It was “... because the armed forces, together with the police, were typical power institutions, pillars of the regime in many

²⁴ Barany, D. Zoltan: Soldier and Politics in Eastern Europe, 1945-90 (New York: St. Martin Press, 1993), p. 90.

²⁵ Joó, Rudolf: The Democratic Control of Armed Forces (Institute for Security Studies Western European Union, 1996), p. 12.

respects.”²⁶ In the hands of political establishment the military was not only part of the system, but also the guardian of the system in domestic and international levels. According to A.A. Timorin, a Soviet military specialist, there are three internal functions of all socialist armies

They act (1) as a psychological deterrent against anti-socialist forces; (2) as a reserve of manpower and equipment for the internal security forces; and (3) as a ‘combat force in cases when the opposition of the enemies of socialism acquire significant scale, intensity, duration, and sharpness (a counter-revolutionary uprising, mutiny, banditry, the unleashing of civil war).²⁷

The Hungarian regime agreed with the Army’s internal function. At the 1970 Politburo meeting, “János Kádár, [the then Secretary-General of the Hungarian Socialist Workers’ Party (HSWP)], asserted that it was the Hungarian People’s Army’s (HPA) task to defend the regime from internal opposition.”²⁸ The 1976 Defense Law articulated and amplified the same internal mission, “...cooperation in the protection of national security and domestic order; participation in the economy and in the education and training of youth; and rendering assistance at times of natural disasters.”²⁹

In addition to this, Communist Party control was not a genuine civilian control. In pluralistic democracy separable and separate players participate in the development of relations between society and the armed forces. This system reflects

alternatives, opposing group references, values and demands. ... defense policy and institutional network that plans and executes that policy, is the product of the interplay of these powerful, conflicting interests. In such environment ... it is easy to delineate the aims and interest of various

²⁶ Joó, Rudolf: The Democratic Control of Armed Forces (Institute for Security Studies Western European Union, 1996), p. 13.

²⁷ A.A. Timorin: Socialno –politicheskaja priroda i naznachenie socialisticheskikh armii in eds Voina i armiiia (Moscow: Voennizdat, 1977), p. 348.

²⁸ Barany, D. Zoltan: Soldier and Politics in Eastern Europe, 1945-90 (New York: St. Martin Press, 1993), p. 90.

²⁹ Zagoni, Erno, “A Magyar Néphadsereg helye a politikai rendszerben,” Honvedsegi Szemle (Budapest, May 1987), p. 4.

actors: the legislature, the executive, the military leadership ... different political parties....³⁰

In a one-party system the opposite is true. In hierarchical structure, such as Communist Party structure, there are no clear dividing lines between institutions, although, it looks relatively simple. Additionally, the decision-making process is obscure, or hidden. In formulating of defense strategy or the military budget the real influence of civilian politicians is never clear.

In Hungary, both the civilian government and military High Command were under strict control of a single party. They were subordinated to a single political power: the Communist Party. To deepen this subordination the Party sent political cadres to the military, and high-positioned military leaders were co-opted to Party leadership. There was no difference between the Party's leadership over the military and state leadership over the armed forces, since instead of real civilian control the military was under a kind of apparatus control. "The lack of distinct roles undermined not only the democratic standards, but also the armed forces, as a separate institution. It proved to be harmful to professional autonomy; it reinforced political opportunism and selection by ideological criteria."³¹

Even though, the Party's control of the armed forces was neither democratic nor civilian, it proved to be very real and quite effective. The Party defined military doctrine, strategy and the main stream of the armed forces' development for a very practical reason: to use the powerful machinery for its purposes.

³⁰ Joó, Rudolf: The Democratic Control of Armed Forces (Institute for Security Studies Western European Union, 1996), p. 13.

³¹ Ibid: p. 15.

Another reason why the Party exercised full control over the military was “... the Communist Party never trusted the professional military. The armed forces were considered an extremely significant group in terms of power, as they were both highly organized and possessed weapons. Consequently, they were perceived by some as potential rivals to the Party.”³² Despite the fact that there was no tendency in the military towards coups, a robust apparatus was built up to prevent this and maintain unconditional loyalty to the Party. Different ways were introduced to exercise oversight: (a) monitoring the armed forces through party organs; (b) controlling subordinating units by Main Political Department; (c) checking the armed forces using secret police.

One of the main ways of politicizing the armed forces was by the introduction of Party structure into military units. Party cells were established in every unit from top to bottom. Ideological indoctrination was provided by permanent and compulsory political education among draftees and commissioned personnel. For career purposes, especially in higher ranks, party membership was more important, than professional capability. “Around 90 percent of the officers were members of the HSWP and 10 percent of the Communist Youth League (CYL).”³³

Another line of Party influence was the Main Political Department (MPD). “The MPD was a legacy of the commissar system originally developed by Trotsky’s revolutionary Red Army in 1918-19, to ensure the loyalty of military officers charged with operational command task.”³⁴ MPDs were introduced at various levels of the military, but were linked, at the same time, to the Party’s leading organs. They were

³² Joó, Rudolf: The Democratic Control of Armed Forces (Institute for Security Studies Western European Union, 1996), p. 15.

³³ Barany, D. Zoltan: Soldier and Politics in Eastern Europe, 1945-90 (New York: St. Martin Press, 1993), p. 95.

³⁴ R. Craig: Black Earth, Red Star A history of Soviet Security Policy (London: Ithaca, 1992), pp.18-19.

involved in every policy matter and could overrule the commander's decision. "Professional military personnel considered the activity of political officers useless, diverting time and energy from real duty, or simply violating [of] professional authority."³⁵ Some observers even noted, "...had it been abolished from one day to the next, no one would have noticed."³⁶

Besides their domestic tasks both the Party cells in the army and the MPD had an international ideological function: deepen proletarian internationalism among the armies of the Warsaw Treaty Organization's (WTO). Generally, "...internationalism meant subordination of national interest to geopolitical consideration, which curtailed to a minimum national autonomy in defense planning and military thinking."³⁷

The third apparatus, built into the military unit was the military counter-intelligence. The name is misleading, since the task of such an organization was mainly to monitor Party loyalty and combat "internal enemy" the "anti-socialist forces" within the armed forces. Such a kind of "military intelligence" was an alien body within the Army because it was subordinated to the Ministry of Interior, not to the Ministry of Defense, and, furthermore, its personnel, in most cases, were out of the chain of command in the military units.

³⁵ Joó, Rudolf: The Democratic Control of Armed Forces (Institute for Security Studies Western European Union, 1996), p. 17.

³⁶ Bokor, Imre: Kiskirályok Mundérban (Budapest: Új Idő, 1989), p. 22.

³⁷ Keleti, Ligárd and Nagy ed: Honvédelmi ismeretek (Knowwedge on Defense) (Budapest: Tankönyvkiadó, , 1986), p. 76.

C. SOCIETAL CONDITIONS

Like other Hungarian governmental institutions, the Hungarian military leadership was not held in high esteem among population due to widespread corruption, mismanagement and allegedly a lack of professionalism. Conversely though, military educational facilities were rather popular among young men. After the foundation of military boarding schools in 1974, military services attracted a substantial number of youth from age 14-18 to these schools. Due to “free accommodation, clothing and allowance, board schools had no recruitment problems.”³⁸ Graduates from board schools were automatically accepted to higher military educational institutions. Individuals of worker and peasant background made up the majority in the military colleges. Such a “high percentage of working class student was partially by design, since military colleges – concerned with potential problems of political reliability – preferred them to those with roots in the intelligentsia.”³⁹ Another reason for the lower rate of youngster from intelligentsia is they considered a military career an appalling career choice.

The low prestige rate of the military was perhaps the most important reason for the recruitment problem. Moreover, during the late 70s and early 80s, a military career lost its financial attractiveness. “Contrary to popular belief, the remuneration of the military profession had been surpassed by that of many other occupational strata”.⁴⁰ On the positive side, the military profession maintained some of its advantages. Retirement age was set at 55 years of age, lower than in any other occupational group. The pay of

³⁸ *Magyar Nemzet*, 23, April 1983.

³⁹ Barany, D. Zoltan: Soldier and Politics in Eastern Europe, 1945-90 (St. Martin Press, New York, 1993), p. 103.

⁴⁰ Malomsoki, Jozsef: A tiszti allomány tarsadalmi helyzetének néhány mutatója (Honvedseg Szemle, June 1987), p. 13.

young officers was relatively good, “especially when compared with other newly graduated professionals.”⁴¹ Moreover, no one had to fear unemployment in the military. Given the emerging trend to “acceptable levels of unemployment”, job security became an attractive part of a military career.

⁴¹ Iszlai, Zoltan: Emberek Angyalborben (Budapest: Zrinyi, 1985), p.12.

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III. FUNDAMENTAL CHANGES IN CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS (1989-1994)

Political and social changes in the late 1980s in Hungary forced the incumbent government to begin the reform of civil-military relations. Security changes and challenges made the winner of the 1990 multi-party election continue this reform. The first part of this chapter examines the legacy of the last Communist government from the period of 1989-1990. The second part deals with the foundation of a legal framework for democratic civilian control over the military and with the first step of defense reform in creating smaller, but better equipped forces capable of protecting the country and carrying out new missions.⁴²

A. LEGACY OF THE LAST COMMUNIST GOVERNMENT

There were incremental political and economical changes during 1980-1989 in Hungary. For example, the possibility of taking part in “second economy” improved living standard for many Hungarians. The previously strict travel limitations were eased; Hungarians could travel to the West, which further amplified the population’s desire for substantial changes in Hungary. Authorities, even if they did not approve it, more and more tolerated appearance of autonomous civil circles, which became a source of new

⁴² “11/1993 OGY Határozat,” (Budapest: 12 March 1993), “27/1993 OGY Határozat,” (22 April 1993) and “Az 1993. évi CX törvény a honvédelemről,” Magyar Közlöny No. 186 (Budapest: 24 December 1993).

parties.⁴³ Although these changes affected almost all aspect of the old system, the political control of the armed forces remained untouched by the rulers of the country. The government of 1989 announced its intention for defense reform; nevertheless, most of these remained only on paper.

In July 1989 the then Prime Minister Miklós Németh noted, "...the new national defense policy needed to make clear that Hungary's national armed forces were in the hand of democratic power under appropriate and strict control." However, when he was asked who was the Commander-in-Chief, he answered, "It is not possible at present to give an unequivocal reply to this."⁴⁴ The Prime Minister might have thought of "appropriate and strict control" as a control exercised by the Communist-reformer Commander-in-Chief, Imre Pozsgai, who had been expected to become President, according to the 1989 Defense reform.

First, in accordance with the "[eight-plus-one-member] round-table discussion"⁴⁵ of spring 1989, MPD was abolished in the Hungarian Army. In line with this decision, all political activities were banned within the boundaries of military facilities so military personnel were not allowed to take part in political activities. The majority of professional soldiers, then, welcomed "the end of ideology and the opportunity to concentrate on military rather than political matters."⁴⁶

⁴³ Schöpflin, George, "Hungary Between Prosperity and Crisis," Conflict Studies No. 136, Institute for the Study of Conflicts, (London: 1982), pp. 14-20.

⁴⁴ Bárány, Zoltán, "East European Forces in Transition and Beyond," East European Quarterly Vol. XXVI, No. 1, (1992), p. 18.

⁴⁵ Besides the HSWP (which renamed itself as Hungarian Socialist Party (MSZP) in October 1989) eight opposition parties participated in round-table discussion: Hungarian Democratic Forum (MDF), Alliance of Free Democrats (SZDSZ), Alliance of Young Democrats (FIDESZ), Christian-Democratic People's Party (KDNP), Independent Smallholders' Party (FKGP), Hungarian Social-Democratic Party (MSZDP), Green Party, and Entrepreneur's Party.

⁴⁶ Magyar Hírlap, 11 March, 1990.

Second, during 1989, the Ministry of Justice drafted a new Constitution, based on principles articulated at round-table talks, to replace the old 1947 Communist one. The Parliament, which was still dominated by members of the Communist Party, passed the new Constitution in October 1989. According to new the Constitution “the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces is the President, who is elected for [a] five-year term.”⁴⁷ “Only Parliament is entitled to make [a] decision concerning the use of the Armed Forces.”⁴⁸ According to Article 19 of the Constitution, the National Assembly has the power to declare the state of war and conclusion of peace. In the event of war it sets up Defense Council for coordinating defense efforts. During peace-time, the prime minister, elected by majority of the National Assembly and the ministers of the government “control the operation of the armed forces, the police and other organs of policing.”⁴⁹

The initiated defense reform divided the defense ministry into two separate parts. A relatively small staff of 135 in the defense ministry was subordinate to the prime minister, and the Headquarter of the Hungarian Army (HA) was subordinate to the President (see Appendix III.A.1).⁵⁰ In the new system the Ministry of Defense (MOD) was responsible for military policy, planning and other administrative and theoretical matters, while the Headquarter of the HA was charged with task of supervising actual military training, development, exercises and the like.

According to some observers, however, this division of entities was a clear intention of the government to remove the armed forces from the direct influence of the next, probable, non-communist government, which was expected to come to power in the

⁴⁷ Article 29/A (1), “The Hungarian Constitution,” p. 5.

⁴⁸ Ibid: Article 35. (1) h. p.8.

⁴⁹ Ibid: Article 35. (1) h. p.8.

⁵⁰ Revised from Simon, Jeffrey: NATO Enlargement & Central Europe (Institute For National Strategic Studies, NDU, 1996), p. 141.

1990 multiparty elections. This allegation, nonetheless, did not contain proof, since the core of the army cadres have been loyal to the state and the Constitution, not to a single party. Even during the communist regime the "...basis of the armed forces [was] the defense of the Hungarian People's Republic [that is, the state and not the party]."⁵¹ Moreover, in June 1989 the National Assemble approved the text of the new military oath that obliged soldiers (including civil servants and policemen) to serve the Republic of Hungary and its Constitution.

In November 1989 "the new oath was signed by 99 percent of the professional corps"⁵² So, concerns were not about loyalty of the officer corps, but about the line of authority. In most parliamentary systems a clear line exists from prime minister through minister of defense to chief of staff. Contrary to this, in the 1989 defense reform of Hungary, "authority went directly from the President to the Commander of the Hungarian Army, leaving out the government of the chain of command, which [after the multiparty election] resulted in increased tension between the president and the civilian government [the president and the prime minister came from different parties]."⁵³

The political transformation, accompanying the power struggle affected military personnel and life as well. "By February 1990 more than 50 generals and 400 colonels were retired and the average age of professional soldiers dropped to 35 years."⁵⁴ In the first half of the 1990, a reported 1700 officers left the service, for better opportunities in civilian life.

⁵¹ Magyar Kozlony, No. 25 (Budapest, 1976), p. 281.

⁵² Nepszabadsag, 2 December 1989.

⁵³ Simon, Jeffrey: NATO Enlargement & Central Europe (Institute For National Strategic Studies, NDU, 1996), p. 142.

⁵⁴ Magyar Hírlap, 24 Februar, 1990.

Since the Army's internal function was altered by the 1990 Defense Law, the officers' training reflected these changes too. In 1989-90 academic year, ideological training was replaced with courses on military and security policy, international law and military history. The structure of the military education was also reorganized. Since the 1987 officer's training reform, which reduced the training period to three years, proved to be unsuccessful, military leadership reintroduced a four-year education program with higher admission criteria. The MOD wanted to attract the best of young men, but since the prestige of a military career was at an all-time low, primarily due to the low income of professional soldiers, the qualification of attendees remained at the previous low rate.

Another factor contributing to the low prestige of the profession was "...the armed forces - more precisely, the military leadership – has long been perceived by the population as the refuge of the incompetent and corrupt. Moreover, for decades the Hungarians had viewed the military not as [a] guarantor of the nation's security but as a representative of foreign interest."⁵⁵ It is possible that the nationalization of the military may change the mind of youths about a military career. Although the MOD wanted to increase salaries and benefits, the government's unwillingness, due to economic difficulties prevented such a measure. As a result "approximately 10 percent of active officers live under the official poverty line."⁵⁶

In contrast, service conditions for enlisted personnel improved in the same period. In 1989 the military leadership introduced a "monthly reception day", when conscripts could avoid the usual chain of command and seek remedy for their complaints. Since political-ideological education was abolished, enlisted personnel could spend their free

⁵⁵ Barany, D. Zoltan: Soldier and Politics in Eastern Europe, 1945-90 (New York: St. Martin Press, 1993), p. 25.

⁵⁶ Pont, 15 and 29 January, 1990, and Magyar Hírlap, 6 September 1990.

time as they saw fit. The modified Defense Law allowed conscientious objectors to serve in the Army without weapons, while such an objection until 1989 was subject to prison sentence. The mandatory military service was eased as well. The length of service was reduced from 18 to 12 months in 1990. "These were important measures not only because they made conscript life easier, but also because they signaled changes in the military establishment's attitude toward the civilian population."⁵⁷

The main purpose of the initiated reform was to render the armed forces accountable to the Hungarian government. It is noteworthy that this reform was initiated by the Communist government and demonstrated significant changes in civil-military relations. While the military was previously subordinated to the Party, the 1989 measures provided that the government, and ultimately the President would control the armed forces. The reform broke the 40-year practice of the Communist direct control of the armed forces.

B. DEEPENING REFORM OF CIVIL-MILITARY RELATION AND THE ARMED FORCES

In the 1990 multiparty election a coalition government, composed of the Hungarian Democratic Forum (MDF) and the Independent Smallholders' Party (FKGP), entered into power. The coalition parties and the opposition agreed on amendments to the new Constitution, regulating the use of force. On 19 June 1990 the National Assembly amended the Constitution, which stipulates, "...now [it] specially required a two-thirds

⁵⁷ Barany, D. Zoltan: Soldier and Politics in Eastern Europe, 1945-90 (New York: St. Martin Press, 1993), p. 127.

[rather than simple] majority of the National Assembly to employ forces, thereby ensuring parliamentary control over them.”⁵⁸ The governing party, on 23 May 1990, appointed Lajos Für (MDF), as the first civilian Minister of Defense, after four decades of Communist rule.⁵⁹ Mr. Für inherited a Communist-implemented Ministry of Defense, which dealt with social and political questions. He expressed concern about his authority, since the Headquarter of the Hungarian Army was separated from the ministry remaining beyond the minister’s reach. Concerned with question of authority and, ultimately, the control of the armed forces, Defense Minister Für, argued that since Hungary was a Parliamentary Democracy, in which the government was responsible to the Parliament to implement overall policy, including defense, it could not be responsible for implementing defense policy, if it did not possess the tools necessary to control the armed forces. President Göncz argued that his authority was based on the responsibility as a Supreme Commander, who had a critical role in national defense. Király Béla, a former general during the 1956 Hungarian uprising, was rehabilitated and a member of the Parliament Defense Committee argued,

...the President is clearly the commander-in-chief but the Constitution places two restriction on his command. First, it authorizes the National Assembly to decide on deploying armed forces within Hungary or abroad. Secondly, it requires the prime minister’s countersignature regarding every action involving national defense. ...no constitutional changes were required, the position of Commander of the Hungarian Army should be abolished, its responsibility should be transferred to the Chief of Staff, and the Chief of Staff should be, unconditionally, subordinated to the defense minister.⁶⁰

⁵⁸ Article 40/A (1), “The Hungarian Constitution,” p. 9.

⁵⁹ Before the Communist takeover in 1947, Hungary had a civilian defense minister, Peter Veres of the National Peasant Party. Although in 1990 the FKG, the coalition partner required the post of defense minister, since it claimed itself as successor of 1947 Peasant Party, Prime Minister Antal (MDF) rejected the request.

⁶⁰ Király, Béla, “Military Reform: What Should Be Done,” *Népszabadság*, 13 April, 1991.

The above-mentioned quotation is noteworthy, because it shows the long process of transformation: from 1991 to present the problem has not yet been resolved.⁶¹ Since the first multiparty election, each administration has had the ambition to transform the Ministry of Defense in line with the model of the Western countries and to reintegrate the Defense Staff into the Ministry.

The transformation of the Ministry meant the reinforcement of the civilian-administrative component of the MOD. This reform sought a “Ministry of Defense, headed by a civilian politician that implements the decision of the Government with respect to the armed forces through the specific military activities of the (reincorporated) Chief of Defense Staff.”⁶² However, implementation of such a kind of transformation encountered difficulties both on the civilian and military side.

Firstly, there was virtually no civilian security and military expertise, neither among former opposition nor among ex-communists on defense and security matters, because these issues were previously out of public debate. Secondly, there were explicit anti-military feelings among the population, which were projected to influential governmental position. Viktor Orbán, the then opposition leader and now Prime Minister, even expressed opinion on disembodiment of the total Hungarian Army. He thought Hungary should solely rely on security guaranties of Western security organizations. Thirdly, the new political elite have not always understood the meaning of civilian control and political neutrality of the armed forces, therefore they were trying to eliminate the Communist ideology from the military, by sometimes using propaganda of

⁶¹ “A Magyar Honvédség Hosszútávú Átalakítás Irányairól,” 61/2000 OGY Határozat, (Budapest: 21 July 2000).

⁶² Joó, Rudolf: The Democratic Control of Armed Forces (Institute for Security Studies Western European Union, 1996), p. 48.

democratic liberal views, which was perceived by numbers of officers as a new indoctrination. The military, also, had no experience working with civilian politicians in the MOD or Parliament. Furthermore, since the military was in relative isolation in society, it had difficulties adapting to the new condition of democracy and market economy.

The market economy and the budgetary constraints worked against the smooth development of civil-military relations. In transitional democracies the declining Gross Domestic Product (GDP) aggravated the tensions inherited in civil-military relations (see Fig. III.B.1.).⁶³

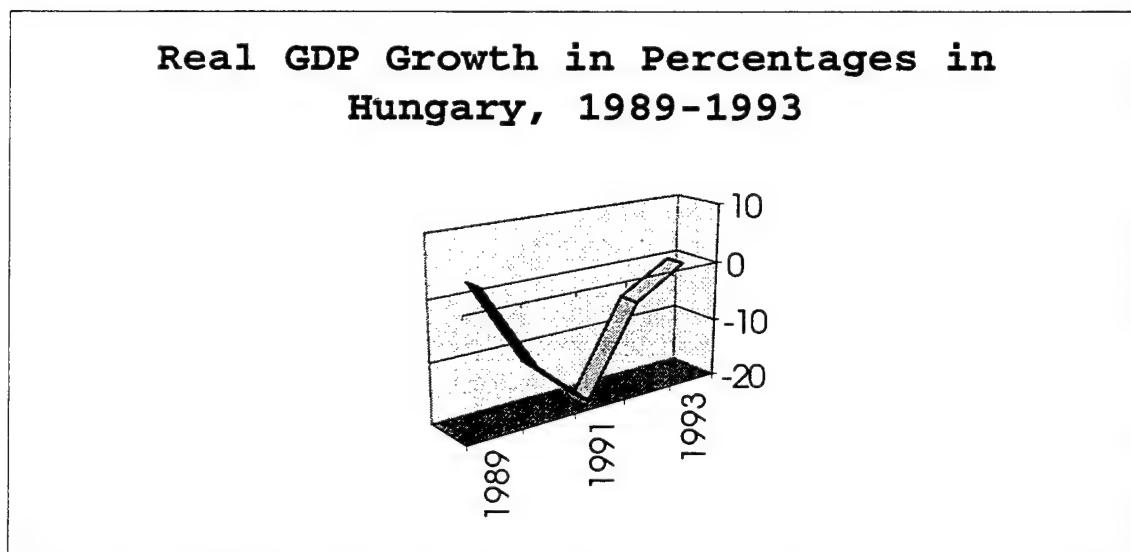


Figure III.B.1.

⁶³ Szemeréki, Réka: "Central European Civil-Military Relations At Risk," ADELPHI paper 306, p.23.

The falling GDP caused a decline as well in the defense budget (see Fig. III.B.2.).⁶⁴

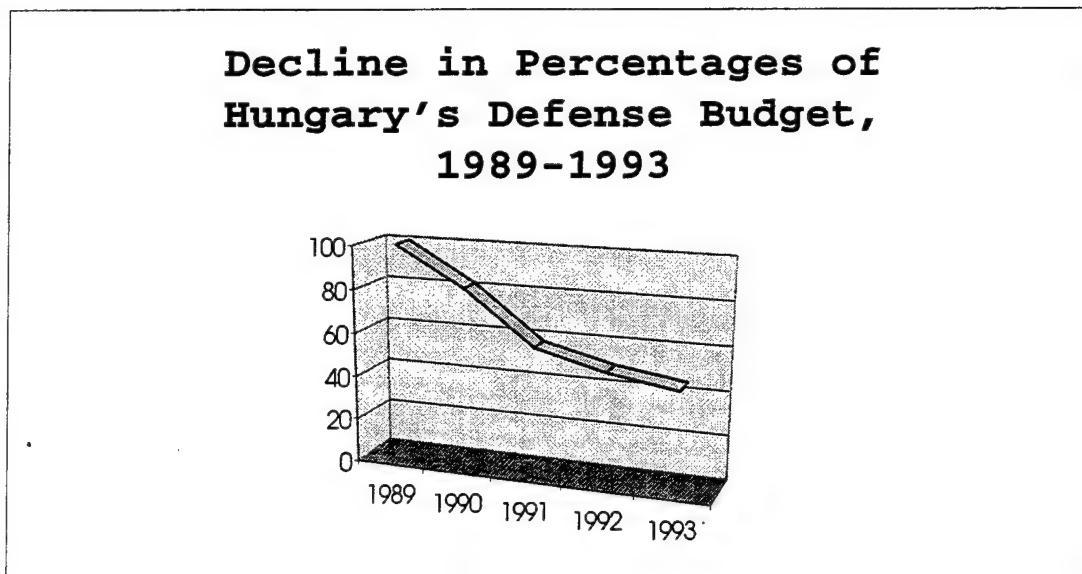


Figure III.B.2.

Examining Fig. III.B.1, and Fig. III.B.2, it is notable that despite the growing rate of the GDP, defense budget continued to decline in the same period of time. This compounded the military's sense of being relegated to a minimum subsistence level and ultimately enhanced their dissatisfaction with the initiated defense reform.

Realizing problems of authority, cooperation and defense spending as serious civil-military issues, the government and the President initiated a new defense reform at the end of 1991. The new defense reform responded to the 1991 Constitutional Court decision regarding the role of the President⁶⁵, and expedited personal changes in the defense ministry (see Appendix III.B.1.).⁶⁶

⁶⁴ Source: Directorate of Management and Consultancy Services, UK Ministry of Defense: "Review of Parliamentary Oversight of the Hungarian Ministry of Defense and Democratic Control of the Hungarian Armed Forces," (London: Ministry of Defense, February 1996), p. 22.

⁶⁵ Magyar Közlöny, No. 103 (Budapest: 26 September, 1991). By the Court decision the President as CINC may issue only guidelines, not orders to the military.

⁶⁶ Revised from Simon, Jeffrey: NATO Enlargement & Central Europe (Institute For National Strategic Studies, NDU, 1996), p. 150.

Alongside the defense reform, which included not only changes in the MOD, but also structural changes in the Hungarian Army, the Parliament began to work on Hungary's new Defense Concept and Security Policy Concept. Some may argue that such important documents should have been approved by the Parliament prior to implementing the defense reform. This allegation may well be true and caused, seemingly, some inappropriate steps in the defense reform.⁶⁷

Elaboration of new the Defense Concept and Security Policy Concept was a result of the "security vacuum", caused by Hungary's withdrawal from the WTO, withdrawal of Soviet troops from Hungary, and new security challenges in the vicinity of Hungary.

On 26 June 1990 the Hungarian Parliament voted overwhelmingly (232 for, 0 against and 4 abstentions) for full withdrawal from the WTO.⁶⁸ Along with this, as agreed upon at the Hungarian and Soviet foreign and defense ministers' meeting in March in Moscow,⁶⁹ the Soviet troops fully withdrew from Hungary by June 1991. In such a situation Hungary faced security risks, different from those encountered earlier. Externally Hungary could face both non-military and military risks. First category of risk would have two appearances,

1. A disastrous effect on the environment. This risk is posed by numerous nuclear reactors in Central and Eastern Europe, which were in serious disrepair. Besides immense environmental damage, another Chernobyl would have increased feelings of vulnerability.
2. A great influx of refugees from the conflict area of the former Soviet Union or the Balkans. The young Hungarian democracy, facing economic difficulties, would be unable to deal with this influx, which may result in social tension and chaos.⁷⁰

⁶⁷ For example: creating territorial defense units in different parts of Hungary, which idea later was abandoned; establishment of Peacekeeping Training Center in Budapest, which within one year was relocated; integration and consequent disintegration of Service HQs

⁶⁸ Nepszabadsag, 27 June, 1990

⁶⁹ Magyar Kozlony, (Budapest: 29 May 1990), pp. 1190-1192.

⁷⁰ Van den Doel, Theo: Central Europe: The New Allies? (Westview Press, 1994), p. 42.

On the other hand, military risks may arise from initially small-scale conflict (ethnic, territorial, religious, nationalistic) in any neighboring country of Hungary, which may escalate and spread to the territory of Hungary, if action is not taken in time.

Internally, as a consequence of regional instability, Slovaks (120,000), Croats (80,000), Serbs (5,000), and Romanians (25,000) living within the Hungarian borders might have posed a problem to Hungary's internal stability.⁷¹ The most acute problems, Hungary faced, were issues of tension with the Slovak Republic and Romania. The Slovakian Vladimir Meciar government using disagreement between Hungary and Slovakia, caused by the Bős-Gabčíkovo-Nagymaros Danube-dam, severely restricted Hungarian minority rights (use of native language, education) in Slovakia.⁷² In Romania, although the government did not participate overtly in it, tension aroused in Transylvania, particularly in Cluj (Kolozsvár in Hungarian), due to a manifested anti-Hungarian attitude of the mayor of Cluj, Georghe Funar.⁷³ Mr. Funar publicly opposed the reopening of the Hungarian General Consulate and the Bolyai University in Cluj.

Hungary had the most relaxed relations, in terms of minorities, with Yugoslavia. Hungarians had the possibility to learn in their native tongue, perform in Hungarian theatre, and to publish Hungarian newspapers. The early 1990 influx of Vojvodinian refugees to Hungary was based on an overreaction to the Bosnian crisis, rather than actual abuse of minority rights. Yet, the ongoing crisis in Bosnia could have had impact

⁷¹ Van den Doel, Theo: Central Europe: The New Allies? (Westview Press, 1994), p. 46.

⁷² www.hetek.hu/98100202.040/Cimlap/ku13.htm.

⁷³ www.mek.iif.hu/porta/szint/tarsad/politika/relations/funar/html/fun94k2.htm.

on the Hungarian minorities in Vojvodina, had the tension spread to that Yugoslavian province.⁷⁴

To ease the probability of tension regarding minority rights in Hungary and in neighboring countries, the Antal government concluded a so-called “Basic Treaty” with Ukraine,⁷⁵ which contained provisions for mutual respect of minorities’ right, respect of existing borders and cooperation on a mutually beneficial basis.

The Hungarian Parliament, taking into account the changed security challenges, adopted “The Basic Principles of National Defense of the Republic of Hungary”⁷⁶ (Defense Concept) in April 1993. The Defense Concept states that the Hungarian Armed Forces have exclusively defensive functions. The country has no preconceived idea of enemy: it does not expect a traditional large-scale attack from any direction; however, it cannot ignore on-going military conflicts in the region.

The eventual escalation of these conflicts and their geographical spread pose a potential military threat, a new type of challenge to the country. Article 16 of the Defense Concept points out that, ultimately Hungary’s security will be determined by membership in NATO and the European Union. The Preamble to the National Security Principles⁷⁷ underlines Hungary’s approach to security matters as primacy of diplomatic means.

Defense Concept reflected an unusually large consensus among the six parties (three of, which were in opposition) in the National Assembly.⁷⁸ It was because the texts

⁷⁴ www.hungary.org/users/hipcat/yugo.htm.

⁷⁵ The pact was signed on 16 June, 1993 and followed by another pact concluded by the next government with Slovakia and Romania on 19 March, 1995 and 16 March, 1996 respectfully.

⁷⁶ “The Basic Principles of National Defense of the Republic of Hungary,” Fact Sheets on Hungary No. 9, (Budapest: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1993).

⁷⁷ “Basic Principles of the Security Policy of the Republic of Hungary,” European Security, vol 3, No. 2, (1994), pp. 352-358.

⁷⁸ Joóm Rudolf: The Democratic Control of Armed Forces (Institute for Security Studies Western European Union, 1996), p. 40.

of the document did not affect direct party interests and the basic policy options were general enough to be acceptable to each parliamentary party.

This six-party consensus helped to formulate and adapt another important legal document by the Parliament, the New Defense Law (Defense Act) on 7 December 1993.⁷⁹ Although the Law was adapted quasi-unanimously, during the adaptation process approximately 400 amendments were proposed by individual members of the Parliament.

The Act deals with clarification of civilian oversight of the armed forces during peace-time and emergency period, legal framework and the Code of Conduct for professional soldiers. According to the Defense Act Parliament plays a primary role in defining the priorities of defense policy.⁸⁰ The National Assembly decides the defense budget, the manning level of the armed forces, the balance between services and the main direction for the development of military technology.⁸¹ The Act made the armed forces directly subordinate to the MOD, which has administrative responsibilities over the armed forces.⁸² At the same time, the Act strengthened the constitutional position of the President, as Commander-in-Chief, in the event of emergency.⁸³

Members of the opposition parties feared that, in case of emergency the government may extend power given by the concept of “partial mobilization”, according to the Constitution 19.§(E), and that it could lead to a weakening of the parliamentary control. To eliminate this fear, the Defense Act stipulates, “in event of surprise air or

⁷⁹ “Az 1993. évi CX törvény a honvédelemről,” Magyar Közlöny No. 186 (Budapest: 24 December, 1993).

⁸⁰ “Az 1993. évi CX törvény a honvédelemről,” Magyar Közlöny No. 186 (Budapest: 24 December, 1993), 4. §.

⁸¹ “Az 1993. évi CX törvény a honvédelemről,” Magyar Közlöny No. 186 (Budapest: 24 December, 1993), 5. §.

⁸² “Az 1993. évi CX törvény a honvédelemről,” Magyar Közlöny No. 186 (Budapest: 24 December, 1993), 9. §, 10. §, 11. §.

⁸³ “Az 1993. évi CX törvény a honvédelemről,” Magyar Közlöny No. 186 (Budapest: 24 December, 1993), 199. § (2).

ground attack, immediate action has to be taken by the Cabinet, simultaneously keeping the Parliament and the President informed.”⁸⁴

The role of the Parliament Defense Committee cannot be omitted. Since 1990 the Committee has became a real functioning institution, in contrast to the window-dressing organization existing under the same name during the Communist era. Given the power by the Defense Act, the Defense Committee has actively participated in defense budget decision, for controlling expenditures,⁸⁵ and in the debate over personnel changes in the MOD and the Hungarian Army.⁸⁶

The new thinking of the national defense affected the very personnel of the Hungarian Army. While in 1989 the military was comprised of 155,000 men, its size became 100,000 men by 1992.⁸⁷ Furthermore, in accordance with the basic principles of national defense, the previous westbound concentration of forces changed to a more balanced geographic distribution of military units in the territory of Hungary.

This re-dislocation of military units caused two unforeseeable problems. First, because of “lacks of [proper] infrastructure and means, relocated units were anything, but combat-ready, which left Hungary in a vulnerable position.”⁸⁸ Second, the relocation amplified with force reduction caused social tension. Since professional soldiers possess quite unique skills, those, who dropped out of the military, could rarely find work in civilian life increasing the number of unemployed.

⁸⁴ “Az 1993. évi CX törvény a honvédelemről,” Magyar Közlöny No. 186 (Budapest: 24 December, 1993), 199.§ (3).

⁸⁵ “Az 1993. évi CX törvény a honvédelemről,” Magyar Közlöny No. 186 (Budapest: 24 December, 1993), 6. § (1).

⁸⁶ “Az 1993. évi CX törvény a honvédelemről,” Magyar Közlöny No. 186 (Budapest: 24 December, 1993), 6. § (4).

⁸⁷ Új Magyarország, (Budapest: 3 December, 1992), p. 2.

⁸⁸ Van den Doel, Theo: Central Europe: The New Allies? (Westview Press, 1994), p. 83.

From the relocating units a substantial number of professional soldiers did not accept the new commission because of the fear of worsening living condition, possible unemployment of spouses and a possible decrease in the quality of education for children. Since the defense budget continuously declined between 1990 and 1993 (see. Fig. III.B.2) and because “approximately 91.2 percent of the defense budget went for the day-to-day expenses”⁸⁹, the MOD did not have resources to help solve these problem.

On 14 January 1994, the Government, according to the legal ground laid in the Defense Act, announced preparatory work for reintegration of the Defense Staff into the MOD⁹⁰, but it was stopped in July 1994, when the change of administration occurred.

⁸⁹ Simon, Jeffrey: NATO Enlargement & Central Europe (Institute For National Strategic Studies, NDU, 1996), p. 153.

⁹⁰ “Az 1993. évi CX törvény a honvédelemről,” Magyar Közlöny No. 186 (Budapest: 24 December, 1993), 41.§.

IV. ON THE WAY TO NATO (1994-1998)

This chapter examines the period between the formation of the new government in Budapest in 1994 and the beginning of the formal accession talks in 1998. The chapter contains three parts. The first part deals with politically and economically motivated changes in the MOD and Defense Forces. The second part offers a brief analysis of financial constraints regarding force modernization. The third part focuses on how the government and the MOD gained political and popular support for NATO membership.

A. STRUCTURAL CHANGES IN THE MINISTRY OF DEFENSE AND THE ARMED FORCES

Since the newly-emerging democracies in Central and East Europe (CEE) declared their desire to “return to Europe”⁹¹, NATO has been discussing the issue of enlargement. The initial response by NATO at the July 1990 London Summit was to extend a “hand of friendship” and invite members of WTO to send liaison ambassadors to NATO.⁹² During 1991-1994, as the situation became more complex with the July 1991 Soviet troops withdrawal from Hungary, the WTO disappearance and the Soviet troops withdrawal from Germany⁹³, NATO responded by creating the North Atlantic Cooperation Council (NACC) to open dialogue on security among Alliance members and

⁹¹ On 25-26 January 1990, during his visit to Hungary and Poland, Czechoslovak’s President Havel called on the three countries’ cooperative effort to “return to Europe”. See: Joó Rudolf: The Democratic Control of Armed Forces (Institute for Security Studies Western European Union, 1996), p. 48.

⁹² “London Declaration on a Transformed North Atlantic Alliance,” NATO Information Service (Brussels: 5-6 July, 1990), articles 7, 8.

⁹³ The Western Group of Soviet Forces completed their withdrawal from Germany in September 1994.

the CEE⁹⁴. At the Brussels NATO Summit of 10-11 January 1994 “Partnership for Peace” (PfP) was initiated and NATO declared that it was committed to future enlargement.⁹⁵ Establishing the PfP may be seen as a step comparable to the Marshall Plan of 1947. Alongside these institutions, the September 1995 “Study on NATO Enlargement” stipulated, among others, the following necessary conditions for countries wishing to join NATO:

...effective democratic control of the military – to include defense management reforms in areas such as transparent defense planning, resource allocation budgeting, appropriate legislation, and parliamentary and public accountability; and ... some minimal degree of military capability and NATO interoperability.⁹⁶

Meanwhile, in Hungary, the second multiparty election resulted in victory of the Hungarian Socialist Party (HPS) that gained 54 percents of the seats in the Parliament.⁹⁷ Although the HSP alone had a majority in the Parliament, it formed a coalition government with the Alliance of Free Democrats (SZDSZ), thus achieving solid two-third majority in the National Assembly, enabling them to govern with “free hand”. The former governing coalition’s member-parties, that are the MDF and FKGP, joined in an opposition position together with the FIDESZ. Gyula Horn, former foreign minister in the Communist era, became Prime Minister and appointed a retired Colonel, former spokesman for the MOD, György Keleti, as defense minister.

⁹⁴ “Rome Declaration on Peace and Cooperation,” NATO Press Communiqué, 8 November, 1991, pp. 4-5.

⁹⁵ “Declaration of the Heads of State and Government issued by the North Atlantic Council in Brussels, Belgium,” NATO Press Communiqué, 11 January, 1994, p. 4.

⁹⁶ “Study on NATO Enlargement,” (Brussels: September, 1995), pp. 2, 13.

⁹⁷ www.osce.org/electionreport/hungary.html.

Upon his arrival, Mr. Keleti began to replace personnel in the previously MDF filled with high positions with his former colleagues from Hungarian Defense Forces.⁹⁸ Mr. Keleti replaced civilian experts with career military personnel even on departmental level, which caused an outcry from the Parliament Defense Committee's chairman, Imre Mécs, expressing concern about "militarization" of the defense ministry⁹⁹, from opposition parties, and even from abroad, such as an assessment from Potomac Foundation: "Instead of having civilians run the Ministry of Defense ... the management of [the] Ministry passed into [the] hand[s] of the uniformed military and former Communist functionaries."¹⁰⁰

The new Minister of Defense also began the internal reorganization of the MOD, firstly, by cutting personnel, and secondly, by adding new departments, such as the NATO Department, and Integration Secretariat for issues dealing with in regard joining NATO, and the Department for Multilateral Cooperation (see Appendix IV.A.1).¹⁰¹

Though the new Defense Law of 7 December 1993 stipulates that the MOD and the Headquarter of the Hungarian Army were to be merged, Mr. Keleti, in September 1994, recommended to the Parliament Defense Committee not to implement this task.¹⁰² His proposal was accepted, since members of the governing parties were in majority in the Defense Committee. However, the decision of the MOD had to be revised, after a British MOD study team, which was asked by the administrative state secretary to do a

⁹⁸ Heti Világgazdaság, (Budapest: 12 December, 1994), pp. 102-103.

⁹⁹ Heti Világgazdaság, (Budapest: 12 December 1994), pp. 102-103.

¹⁰⁰ Magyar Hírlap, 17 March, 1995.

¹⁰¹ National Defense, (Budapest: Ministry of Defense, 1995).

¹⁰² FBIS-EEU-94-174, (8 September 1994), p. 13.

survey on parliamentary oversight of the MOD, had concluded its work.¹⁰³ Nevertheless, the real integration of the Defense Staff would take years and be accomplished by 2002¹⁰⁴ at best.

The above-mentioned problems of a separated Ministry of Defense and Defense Staff existed in each former WTO country. Until 1989-1990, Ministries of Defense dealt mostly with social-political matters, while Defense Staff functions were defined in Moscow, at the WTO Joint Armed Forces Headquarter, which rarely took into consideration national interests and requirements of national authority over the armed forces.¹⁰⁵

Besides politically motivated changes, budget constraint also played a role in reorganizing the Hungarian Army. Mr. Keleti announced in September 1994, that as a cost-saving measure he would reduce the Army's Command size, eliminate intermediate command levels and command the military zones to report directly to General Staff.¹⁰⁶ The reform was "to reduce Hungary's four military districts to two and decrease staff, and at the same to enhance the ability to react rapidly, make communication faster, and create better informed, more independent staff."¹⁰⁷ Army Commander, General János Deák supported the minister's proposal; while presenting the reform concept to the National Assembly, he noted, "...the program was motivated by the fact that budgetary allocation were inadequate to maintain existing military structures and by the need to

¹⁰³ "Review of Parliamentary Oversight of the Hungarian MOD and Democratic Control of the Hungarian Defense Forces," Study No. 810, (London: Directorate of Management and Consultancy Services, February, 1996), pp. 45-46.

¹⁰⁴ "Rendkívüli állapot (Emergency Situation)," HVG, 2000/48, (Budapest: 2 December 2000), pp. 7-10.

¹⁰⁵ Bárány, Zoltán: Soldier and Politics in Eastern Europe, 1945-90, (New York: St. Martin Press, 1993), pp. 105-106.

¹⁰⁶ "Defense minister Keleti interview," Népszabadság, 8 September 1994, p. 4.

¹⁰⁷ Deák, Péter, "Armed Forces Reform," Figyelő, (Budapest: 10 August 1995), pp. 17-18.

modify the Hungarian Armed Forces for integration with NATO.”¹⁰⁸ In accordance with the 88/1995 National Assembly Resolution on Direction of the “Long and Medium Term Reform of the Hungarian Defense and its Personnel Strength”,¹⁰⁹ the effect of the reorganization would be a reduction of 8,400 civilians and 5,400s officers between 1996 and 1998.¹¹⁰ Due to the continuing fiscal constrain the Army’s size had dropped from 155,000 to 93,000 by July 1995, and was planned to “...reduce further to 70,000 by the end of 1996, ... the reform concept envisioned an army consisting of 60,000 personnel by 1998, which would comprise 0.5 percent of the Hungary’s population.”¹¹¹

B. FINANCIAL CONSTRAINTS: AN OBSTACLE TO MODERNIZATION

In 1990-1995 despite, sometimes bitter, parliamentary political debate, there was a consensus among the six parties, represented in the Parliament concerning the inevitability of a substantial force reduction. The 88/1995 National Assembly Resolution, though it was passed due to the majority of the governing parties in the Parliament, ended this consensus. The opposition criticized the reform as “fiscal restrictive and budget driven, lacking the element of long term professional conceptual planning.”¹¹² Financial constraints, however, were really severe. Therefore the Hungarian Government’s state administration plan required further cuts in government expenses over the following years.¹¹³

¹⁰⁸ FBIS-EEU-95-005, 9 Januar 1995, p. 22.

¹⁰⁹ “Reform of the Armed Forces: 1995-1998-2005,” (Budapest: Ministry of Defense, 1995)

¹¹⁰ “Reform of the Armed Forces: 1995-1998-2005,” (Budapest: Ministry of Defense, 1995), p. 11

¹¹¹ Magyar Hirlap (Budapest: 15 May 1995), p. 4.

¹¹² “Cuts in military personnel,” Népszabadság, (Budapest: 11 July 1995), p.4.

¹¹³ FBIS-EEU-96-091, 9 May 1996, pp. 38-39.

The state administration plan, together with the still high inflation, “led to a 60% decrease in defense budget in real terms, while it increased nominally by about 57% in 1989-1996.”¹¹⁴ In GDP terms The Hungarian defense budget amounted to 1.5% and 1.4% of the GDP in 1995 and 1996 correspondingly, remaining the lowest among all Central European neighbors.¹¹⁵ The overall reducing defense budget left no alternatives for the government but to prioritize manpower and operation and maintenance (O&M) at the expense of investment, research and development (see Table IV.B.1). This questioned the Army’s possibilities of complying with NATO standards and questioned “whether Hungarian political elite either understands and/or really supports [that] goal.”¹¹⁶

**Defense Budget by Function in Hungary in Percentages
1995-1996**

Year	Personnel	O&M	Procurement	R&D	Infrastructure
1995	52	36	8	0	4
1996	50	35	9	0	6

Table IV.B.1.¹¹⁷

Undeniably, this situation was not only unique for Hungary. For historical reasons, both Poland and the Czech Republic also encountered similar economic constraints, once they were members of the WTO and the Council of Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA). Table IV.B.2, shows changes in defense expenditure in Poland and

¹¹⁴ IISS, ADELPHI Paper No. 306 (Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 22.

¹¹⁵ “Conference on Civil-Military Relation in the Context of an Evolving NATO,” (Budapest: Ministry of Defense, September 1997), p. 176.

¹¹⁶ Ibid: p. 178.

¹¹⁷ IISS, ADELPHI Paper No. 306 (Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 26.

the Czech Republic; while Table IV.B.3, demonstrates defense budget allocation by function of these two countries.

Defense Expenditure as a Percentage of GDP 1992-1995

	1992	1993	1994	1995
Czech Republic	3.8	2.7	2.7	2.8
Poland	2.3	2.6	2.4	2.5

Table IV.B.2.¹¹⁸

**Defense Budget by Function in Percentages
1995-1996**

	Personnel	O&M	Procurement	R&D	Infrastructure
1995					
Czech Republic	35	43	14	4	4
Poland	63	22	12	2	1
1996					
Czech Republic	41	26	15	3	16
Poland	69	15	14	1	1

Table IV.B.3.¹¹⁹

Despite scarce resources, the government decided to initiate improvement in military technology in 1998, to be interoperable with NATO forces. On 19 September 1995 the National Assembly approved two proposals on air defense to improve radars

¹¹⁸ IISS, ADELPHI Paper No. 306 (Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 25.

¹¹⁹ Ibid: p. 26.

and to procure a low-altitude air defense missile system.¹²⁰ The US-based contractor, Westinghouse won the radar bid, and the US agreed to assist in the modernization of the radar system in the framework of PfP, while the French “MATRA” won the low-altitude air defense missile system with “MISTRAL” missiles.¹²¹

Aircraft procurement is another important factor shaping the defense budget and force structure. Although, Hungary in 1993 acquired 28 MiG-29¹²² (Fulcrum) aircraft from Russia as to cover part of its debt to Hungary, military and civilian experts agreed to procure Western aircrafts to fulfill NATO compatible requirements, because operational life-span of the MIGs expires in 2002. Furthermore, the O&M cost and refurbishing expenses to make these aircraft interoperable with NATO would require vast resources. In December 1995 a tentative decision was made to purchase 30 combat aircraft from among Swedish “Gripen”, US F-16 or F-18 or French “Mirage”.¹²³ The Finance Ministry concluded, however, that “no deal could be concluded because the money was not available”,¹²⁴ and the government decided to postpone the decision until 1997.¹²⁵

The military leadership, though, agreed on force reduction and accepted the Parliament decision on a budget cut, and warned politicians, as General Deák admitted in a November 1995 report to Parliament Defense Committee, “that effect of reorganization, downsizing, [a] smaller budget and reduced training was having an effect upon morale, ... the professional staff was particularly critical, ... the officer salary is not in proportion

¹²⁰ FIBIS-EEU-95-212, 2 November 1995, p. 9.

¹²¹ “Defense Minister Keleti interview,” FIBIS-EEU-95-184, 22 September 1995, p. 16.

¹²² FIBIF-EEU-93-105 3 June 1993, p. 15.

¹²³ Magyar Nemzet (Budapest: 6 February, 1996).

¹²⁴ Népszabadság (Budapest, 10 May 1996).

¹²⁵ This decision was further delayed, first because of the new election, then the controversial letter of intend made by the new minister of defense in 2000 (see Magyar Hirlap Online, 22 November 2000). The seemingly, last decision on aircraft procurement was made in the National Security Council session (see Népszabadság, 13 February 2001).

with their responsibility.”¹²⁶ During 1996 General Deák retired and Lt. General Ferenc Végh, the first Hungarian US Army War College graduate, assumed the position of Army Commander/Chief of Staff in May 1996.¹²⁷ In his testimony to the Parliament Defense Committee on 6 June 1996, he noted, “an Army of 45,000 would be enough to defend the country, but the 88/1995 Parliamentary Resolution allotted only half of that amount for functioning that Army. Therefore, the political decision-makers needed to decide whether they want to have an effective defense force or an operetta army.”¹²⁸ Later he went on by indicating frustration with civilian politicians, when he acknowledged that it is unclear whether Hungarian politicians understand the need of force modernization and training, and added that Hungary would

probably be unable too answer [NATO’s] question on army budget and army equipment. ... It is the task of the politicians and financial expert to plan and distribute the budget. This means both civilian control and civilian responsibility. ... If we cannot increase the material expenses, we will not be able to fulfill further NATO requirements. NATO does not need untrained soldiers.¹²⁹

Only after the 1997 Madrid NATO Summit, where the North Atlantic Council (NAC) invitation was extended to three countries (Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland) to begin accession talks with NATO, the Hungarian government made a commitment to increase the defense budget annually by 0.1% of the GDP between 1998 and 2001, reaching 1.84% of the GDP¹³⁰, still lower than the average 2.5% NATO defense budget. Another important aspect of the committed defense budget increment was the possibility to substantially increase military’s salaries in the next couple of years. The law stipulated

¹²⁶ FIBIS-EEU-95-230, 30 November 1995, p. 17.

¹²⁷ Magyar Honvéd, (Budapest: 8 December 1996), pp. 6-7.

¹²⁸ FIBIS-EEU-96-111, 7 June 1996, p. 22.

¹²⁹ “LTG Ferenc Végh interview,” Magyar Hirlap, (Budapest: 19 July 1997).

¹³⁰ “A Magyar Köztársaság 1998 évi költségvetése (Budget of the Republic of Hungary for 1998),” 1997 évi CXLVI törvény.

that the military's salary would increase on average 19.6% over two years. Nonetheless, due to existing financial constraints, salary correction happened in two steps. Military personnel got 80% of its salary guaranteed into law in 1998, and a full 100% of its salary in 1999.

C. MOUNTING PUBLIC AND POLITICAL SUPPORT FOR NATO INTEGRATION

The will of the government, embodied in the commitment to NATO, to increase the defense budget in support of the military had satisfied military personnel and politicians. Nevertheless, Hungary faced another problem in civil-military relations prior to NATO accession. While the military was generally pro-NATO, for example, 60% expressed supporting views in 1994 and around 70% in 1996¹³¹, a poll conducted in 1996 indicated that only 44% of the general population favored NATO enlargement.¹³² This was based on the “neutral sentiment” inherited from the 1 November 1956 speech of Imre Nagy¹³³, who proclaimed Hungarian neutrality and its withdrawal from WTO. Results of the poll questioned the effectiveness of the government’s presentation of its NATO policies. Nevertheless, the above figures show an overall trend.

The military blesses those policies that increase its budget and importance, while the general population opposes any extra cost, increasing social spending. Interestingly,

¹³¹ Molnár, Ferenc: A Magyar Honvédség Civil Kontrolljának Helyzete és Lehetőségei (Budapest: ZMKA, 1996), p. 15.

¹³² Szabó, János: A Hivatalos Tisztek és Tiszelyettesek NATO Csatlakozással Kapcsolatos Beállítódásai (Budapest: ZMKA, 1996), p.10.

¹³³ Király, B.K, Jónás, Paul: The Hungarian Revolution of 1956 in Retrospect (Columbia University Press, 1978), p. 55.

but not surprisingly this public view of not appreciating an obligations of the NATO membership even was held by those in high positions. The Defense Ministry's Deputy State Secretary for Defense Policy noted, "First, we wish to participate in decision-making. Second, we expect the defense guarantees included in Article 5 of the Washington Agreement will be extended to Hungary."¹³⁴ To cope with the problem the government and Ministry of Defense employed a new Public Relations (PR) strategy.

In 1996 the MOD established "Euroatlanti Studió" Communication Studio¹³⁵ to help promote euro-atlantic integration, and to organize and conduct public forums, exhibitions and customary-celebrated air shows, in which the Hungarian Air Force along with the Air Forces of different NATO countries took part. It was important for the government to "sell" the idea of euro-atlantic integration, since it would cost a lot of taxpayers' money. By a Hungarian assessment, "Hungarian contribution to the direct cost of the NATO accession would be 108-144 billion forints (HUF), while cost of the transformation of the Army would be 360-484 billion HUF."¹³⁶

Eventually, as an early 1997 poll showed, only 34% of the general population opposed NATO membership for Hungary. However, despite the rather high popular support for NATO membership, "support in favor to send troops to defend another ally remained as low as 63%."¹³⁷ This can be explained by the historical heritage of the 1956 Hungarian Revolution and the aftermath of the 1968 Czechoslovak invasion.

When the HPS formed a government in 1994 it promised, after the accession talks ended, to solicit the opinion of the populace about NATO membership. To keep its

¹³⁴ "István Gyarmati interview," Népszava, 26 August 1997.

¹³⁵ www.jetfly.hu/index.php3.

¹³⁶ Colonel Nagy, László, "Thoughts About the Expected Cost of the NATO Accession," in Új Honvédség, (Budapest: 1 June 1997), pp. 53-57.

¹³⁷ Opinion Analyses M-79-97, p. 2.

promise the government called for a referendum on 16 November 1997. SZDSZ, the coalition partner regarded “the NATO membership as a matter of extraordinary importance. For this reason it accept[ed] the referendum [as] binding.”¹³⁸ The referendum turned out to be more successful than expected. The turnout was 49.24% and 85.33% of the voters said “yes” to the question “Do you agree that the Republic of Hungary should guarantee its security by joining NATO?”¹³⁹

Another important issue, where political and public support could be achieved was military education. Education was a key way to change military and public thinking. Already back in 1993, the Parliament passed a Law about Higher Education, but implementation of that law was a task of the new government of 1994-1998. According to the law, military higher educational facilities were integrated into the Ministry of Education.¹⁴⁰ Although, educational facilities remained dependent on financial support from the ministry of defense, their educational-professional supervision went to civilian hands. Furthermore, military colleges and the National Defense University (NDU) began to offer courses in security and strategic studies, and civil-military relations not only for military personnel but also for civilian and even government employees and members of Parliament. This was important for a better understanding between civilian policy-makers and the military, since, as Tamás Wachsler, Defense Committee Deputy Chairman noted, “unless MPs [members of the Parliament] ask the correct question, they will not get the [right] answer [from the military] they are looking for.”¹⁴¹

¹³⁸ MTI, (Budapest: 28 August 1997).

¹³⁹ 118/1997 OGY Határozat (Budapest: 19 November 1997).

¹⁴⁰ 1993/LXXX Law about the Higher Education (Budapest: 13 July 1993), Part I.

¹⁴¹ Simon, Jeffrey: NATO Enlargement and Central Europe (NDU Press, 1996), p.165

On the other hand, according to the law, civilian universities also began to provide courses for military personnel in every aspect of science and social studies.¹⁴² Amplifying the effect of military educational reform, from the 1995 academic year on: female students were eligible to attend military colleges and university. With such an opening for the female part of the population the military also gained additional public support.

¹⁴² IISS, ADELPHI Paper 306 (London: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 44.

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V. INSIDE NATO, IN THE WAR AND THE AFTERMATH FOR CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS (1998-2000)

The period between 1998 and 2000 was very intensive and demanding for Hungarian civil-military relations. The new government, which entered into power in the summer of 1998, inherited the ongoing accession talks with NATO. As a result of complying with minimum requirements¹⁴³ for NATO membership, on 12 March 1999 Hungary became a full-member of NATO. On 24 March 1999, NATO began the Kosovo War, in which Hungary participated by providing airfields, airspace and Host Nation Support (HNS) to NATO troops. The war highlighted deficiencies in the Hungarian Armed Forces, particularly the Air Force¹⁴⁴, and accelerated the modernization process. This modernization, which includes drastic force reduction, base-closure, and the acquisition of new military technology, required strong political and public support, since force reduction affects the social-political environment and the procurement process needs domestic political-party support.

A. CHANGES IN POWER AND ESTABLISHING LEGAL BASIS FOR JOINING NATO

In the summer of 1998, after the third multi-party election, a new government – a coalition of the FIDESZ-Hungarian Civic Party (FIDESZ-MPP) and the Independent Smallholders' Party (FKGP) – entered into power. According to the coalition agreement,

¹⁴³ "A Magyar NATO Tagság," HVG, 1999/10, (BudapestÉ 13 March 1999), pp. 7-10.

¹⁴⁴ "Radio interview with PM Orbán," 14 February 2001.

the FKGPs had a right to nominate ministers of defense, agriculture and environment. Thus, after the FKGPs nomination, the new Prime Minister, Viktor Orbán (FIDESZ-MPP) appointed Dr. János Szabó, a lawyer, as minister of defense. Mr. Szabó had experience neither in military matters nor in state administration, but in the Parliament Defense Committee he testified, "...I prepared for this position for one week from articles and military alumni journals."¹⁴⁵

The new defense minister began his work, as it had been done during the last ten years.¹⁴⁶ He changed the personnel in key ministerial positions, practically down to the deputy state secretary level, with the exception of István Gyarmati, the Deputy State Secretary for Defense Policy (see Appendix V.A.1).¹⁴⁷ The appointment of the new leadership of the MOD demonstrates the notable dynamics of domestic politics. Despite the intention of the new government to replace the previous establishment, they granted a position to Mr. Gyarmati, who in 1996 declared to assume the position until Hungary's NATO accession, since he was the only person in a high position, who had any knowledge of NATO in the new MOD.

Another interesting appointment was Tamás Waschler as administrative state secretary. His appointment went against the request of the smaller coalition partner to establish a "clear FKGPs ministry" and, more importantly, it was unexpected, since Mr. Waschler left the FIDESZ in 1994, after his defeat for the party-presidency of the FIDESZ.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁵ "Kormányszemle," HVG, 2000/27, (Budapest: 8 July 2000), p. 7.

¹⁴⁶ "Az Orbán-kormány államtitkárai," HVG, 1998/31, (Budapest: 8 August, 1998), p. 8.

¹⁴⁷ Honvédelem 1998, (Budapest: Honvédelmi Minisztérium, 1999).

¹⁴⁸ "Csillagosok Háborúja," HVG, 2000/36, (Budapest: 9 September 2000), pp. 89-93.

The new government and defense ministry's leadership had priceless advantages in comparison with the previous ones. They had political support of the parliamentary parties, since "...all parliamentary parties have emphasized the need for NATO membership, not because of perceived threat, but because the euro-atlantic integration offers the best conditions for security, stability and modernization."¹⁴⁹ On the other hand, the result of the referendum, regarding Hungary's NATO membership, held on 17 November 1997, showed that a majority of public support for NATO.¹⁵⁰ Thus, under such fortunate circumstances the new government could focus on creating essential new laws and amending existing ones for NATO accession and complying with minimum Target Force Goals (TFG) requirements.

The most important amendment to the Constitution, is the one that governs use and deployment of force, since with joining NATO, Article 5 mission could have required sending Hungarian troops abroad. The then existing Constitution stipulated, "Only Parliament is entitled to make decision concerning the use of the Armed Forces."¹⁵¹ The government wanted to amend the Constitution so that the government would have the right to decide on deployment of the Hungarian military in a NATO context. Since the amendment to the Constitution requires two-third majority support of the Parliament, the governing coalition needed support of the opposition parties as well. In that period of time, the governing parties suffered a setback based on the domestic political struggle.

By the parliamentary "house" regulation, each parliamentary party can originate a parliamentary inspection committee, providing 75 members of the Parliament support the

¹⁴⁹ "Belül tágasabb," HVG, 1999/10, (Budapest: 13 March 1999), pp. 7-10.

¹⁵⁰ 118/1997 OGY Határozat, (Budapest: 18 December 1997).

¹⁵¹ Constitution of the Republic of Hungary Article 35. (1) h. p.8.

idea,¹⁵² Thus, in November 1998 the Hungarian Socialist Party (MSZP) and the Alliance of Free Democrats (SZDSZ) initiated the establishment of an inspection committee dealing with the “nomination practice of governing parties”.¹⁵³ Although the governing parties had not rejected the opposition request to establish an inspection committee, their majority in the House changed the scope of the committee, making it irrelevant.¹⁵⁴ That degradation of the opposition’s request resulted in the withdrawal of their support from the effort to amend the Constitution. The opposition parties stated that they did not support extending the right of the government, while the government was cutting back their rights.¹⁵⁵ In the assessment of Pál Dunay, director of Center for Security Studies, the amendment would have helped in coordinating joint action with NATO, however this was not an accession criteria.¹⁵⁶

Interestingly enough, the opposition parties supported both the 1998/LXXXV Law on “National Security Authority” and the amendment to the 1993/CX Defense Law. The 1998/LXXXV Law sets forth provision to support NATO and Western European Union (WEU) Security Manual implementation in Hungary.¹⁵⁷ According to the law, the “Authority” supervises implementation laws on classified information in accordance with NATO and the WEU Security Manual.¹⁵⁸ The 1998/LXXXIX Law on National Defense implemented expression of “allied forces” and “allied states” into Hungarian laws. The amendment to the 1993/CX Law states, “The Republic of Hungary basically relies on its

¹⁵² “Az Országgyűlés Házszabálya,” 8/1989 OGY Határozat, 23 §, (Budapest: 25 March 1989).

¹⁵³ 70/1998 OGY Határozat, (Budapest: 23 November 1998).

¹⁵⁴ Governing parties not only changed the scope of the committee, e.g. extending to deal with the previous government’s nomination practice, but also abandoned an old unwritten agreement that an opposition originated committee should be chaired by an opposition party member.

¹⁵⁵ “Folytatódó Nyilatkozatháború,” Népszabadság, 16 December 1998.

¹⁵⁶ “A jogrendszer natositása,” HVG, 1999/7, (Budapest: 20 February 1999), pp. 111-114.

¹⁵⁷ 1998/LXXXV Law, 1. §, (Budapest: 22 December 1998).

¹⁵⁸ 1998/LXXXV Law, 4. §, (a), (Budapest: 22 December 1998).

own national economy, national defense forces in defending the integrity of Hungary, and ultimately on allied states and allied forces in sustaining individual and collective defense capability.”¹⁵⁹ The new law defines additional roles of the Hungarian Armed Forces as, “...meet military obligations originated in international treaties, especially with North Atlantic Treaty Organization, United Nation and Organization of Security Cooperation in Europe.”¹⁶⁰ Thus opposition parties such as MSZP and SZDSZ, that were previously governing parties, sustained their commitment to NATO and supported the adaptation of laws, necessary to NATO accession.

During the accession talks, Hungary committed itself to meet 48 so-called TFGs within 7 years, 14 of which would be met by the day of accession.¹⁶¹ Though information on TFG are mostly classified, they contain, among others, congestion-free communication network, integrated air defense, units under NATO command and information security.

In early 1998 the Ministry of Defense announced a tender for tele(phone)communication network, in which the German “Siemens”, US “Lucent”, French “Alcatel”, Austrian “Kapsch” and Swedish “Ericsson” companies participated. After long – political and professional – debates, Dr. Szabó, Minister of Defense, despite Parliamentary Defense Committee advice that both Siemens’ and Lucent’s bids met the tender’s criteria, qualifying both of them as possible [shared] builder of the military

¹⁵⁹ 1998/LXXXIX Law, Article I, 1.§ (1), (Budapest: 22 December 1998).

¹⁶⁰ 1998/LXXXIX Law, Article I, 5.§ (1) (e), (Budapest: 22 December 1998).

¹⁶¹ “Gábor Iklódy, Head of NATO Department of MFA, interview,” HVG, 1999/10, (Budapest: 13 March 1999), pp. 7-10.

communication network¹⁶², declared Siemens, as the winner of the 20-billion worth bid.¹⁶³

Hungary's joining of the integrated air defense system is important both for Hungary and NATO, since Hungary does not have common border with any of the NATO countries. Therefore, NATO can provide a guarantee according to Article 5 mission only by air. Thus, authorized by the National Assembly resolution in 1995¹⁶⁴, Hungary began to build an Air Sovereignty Operation Center in 1998, which had to be finished by February 1999.¹⁶⁵ As far as Hungarian units under NATO command are concerned, Hungary offered the Szolnok Rapid Reaction Battalion and the 25th Tata Mechanized Infantry Brigade to NATO command.¹⁶⁶

As a result of changing security environment, the closing accession talks in which Hungary was to become a member of the Euro-Atlantic security community, the government initiated an amendment to the Basic Security Principles adopted in 1993. With the full support of the parliamentary political parties the National Assembly passed a resolution on Basic Security Principles of the Republic of Hungary on 29 December 1998. The resolution states

In recent years there have been substantial changes in Hungary's security environment. By becoming a member of NATO, Hungary institutionally also becomes a member of a community of developed, democratic and stable countries. Thus, there is a need to reformulate Basic Security Principles of the Republic of Hungary.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶² "Még nincs vége a telefontendernek," Népszabadság Online, (Budapest: 13 August 1998).

¹⁶³ "Dr. Szabó a HB ellenére döntött," Népszabadság Online, (Budapest: 3 September 1998).

¹⁶⁴ "Defense Minister Keleti interview," FIBIS-EEU-95-184, 22 September 1995, p. 16.

¹⁶⁵ "Irány Dél," HVG, 1999/8, (Budapest: 17 February, 1999), p. 110.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁷ "The Preamble," 94/1998 OGY Határozat, (Budapest: 29 December 1999).

The resolution restates that Hungary does not have a perceived enemy, all players, who follow basic principles of international law, are considered partners by Hungary, and it is committed to settling dispute according to international law and European practice.¹⁶⁸ As a new principle though, the resolution stipulates:

Hungary sustains its security most effectively as a member of North Atlantic Treaty on the basis of collective security. As a member of NATO, Hungary has committed itself to sharing the burden of collective defense. Hungary sees the Allies' consultative mechanism as a tool of enhancing security and stability in the Euro-Atlantic region and articulating national interests. Trans-Atlantic cooperation is a basic factor in European stability and security for a long-run.¹⁶⁹

B. IN THE KOSOVO WAR

On 9 February 1999, the Parliament with overwhelming majority vote (330 “yes, 13 “no” and 1 absentee) passed a law ratifying Hungary’s membership to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, dated 4 April 1949.¹⁷⁰ Hungary, after depositing its instrument of accession with the Government of the United States, legally became a member of NATO on 12 March 1999.

After only two weeks of a honeymoon with NATO and after the unsuccessful mission of Richard Holbrooke to persuade Yugoslav President, Slobodan Milisevic to accept the US-initiated peace agreement, NATO opened an air-war against Hungary’s neighbor Yugoslavia on 24 March 1999.¹⁷¹ The Hungarian government and public were caught off guard by the immediate war; although; nobody discounted such a course of

¹⁶⁸ 94/1998 OGY Határozat, Article 5, (Budapest: 29 December 1999).

¹⁶⁹ 94/1998 OGY Határozat, Article 7, (Budapest: 29 December 1999).

¹⁷⁰ 1999/I Törvény, 1. § (Budapest: 9 February, 1999). The Hungarian Life and Truth Party (MIÉP), based on heritage of 1956 uprising voted „no” and argued for position of neutrality.

¹⁷¹ “NATO légicsapás Jugoszláviára,” Népszabadság Online, (Budapest: 24 March 1999).

action. The NATO's request to provide indefinite use of Hungarian airspace, airfield and logistic facilities in supporting the Kosovo mission arrived to the Hungarian government on 23 March 1999 at 2100 hours.¹⁷² On the next day, during a parliamentary session, the National Assembly passed a resolution supporting NATO's request. Since the Constitution gives the Parliament the right to authorize the crossing of the Hungarian border by any foreign military personnel and means, the resolution needed two-third majority vote.¹⁷³ The resolution stipulates

According to the Constitution 40.§ (1) the National Assembly authorizes combat, transport, surveillance aircrafts and helicopters, participating in NATO's Kosovo mission to implement UN resolutions regarding the Kosovo crisis, to use Hungary's airspace, airfields, air-control and logistic facilities without restriction during the time of the mission.¹⁷⁴

The government and opposition parties in assuring the Hungarian population about the role of NATO aircraft in Hungary stated, "The role of NATO aircrafts is mostly to defend the Hungarian airspace."¹⁷⁵ The government, furthermore, ruled out Hungary's direct involvement in military actions and pressed NATO and Milosevic to avoid military action in Vojvodina due to 300,000 Hungarian minorities living there.¹⁷⁶ Hungary's fear of NATO military action in Vojvodina was not baseless, since in Vojvodina, Yugoslavia had two long-range air-defense radar stations, which were, very possibly, on the NATO target list.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷² "A NATO használhatja a magyar reptereket," Népszabadság Online, (Budapest: 25 March 1999).

¹⁷³ "A NATO használhatja a magyar reptereket," Népszabadság Online, (Budapest: 25 March 1999).

Members of Parliament voted 225 „yes” 12 „no” and 1 absentee. The MIÉP members voted against resolution.

¹⁷⁴ 20/1999 OGY Határozat, 1. §, (Budapest: 24 March 1999).

¹⁷⁵ "A NATO használhatja a magyar reptereket," Népszabadság Online, (Budapest: 25 March 1999).

¹⁷⁶ Dalder, Ivo H, O' Hanlon, Michael E: Winning Ugly, (Washington DC: Brooking Institution Press, 2000), p. 129.

¹⁷⁷ "Ez nem Irak," HVG, 1999/12, (Budapest: 27 March 1999), p. 24.

The war in Kosovo immediately highlighted deficiencies in Hungary's policy-making and military capability, particularly in the air force. In such a situation, where rapid decision-making is necessary, the consultative mechanism, based on the consensus of the parliamentary parties proved to be insufficient; therefore the government justified its desire to exclusively be in a decisive position regarding use of force. Whereas, in the domestic political arena, where parties build up policy on confrontation, which is the case in Hungary, neither the governing coalition nor the opposition parties support extension of rights and power of others.¹⁷⁸ Due to this, MSZP requested the government to press NATO not to conduct air strikes from Hungarian air bases, arguing that the 20/1999 National Assembly Resolution did not authorize such actions.¹⁷⁹ MSZP articulated, that air strikes from Hungarian territory could initiate Yugoslavian retaliation against Hungarian minorities in Vojvodina causing a massive influx of refugees to Hungary. However, governing parties, backed up with the other opposition party, SZDSZ, rejected the proposal, and Prime Minister Orbán warned MSZP "...not to use a military situation in Yugoslavia in domestic political agenda."¹⁸⁰

Another issue, where parliamentary parties expressed different views, was the status of Vojvodina. On 28 April 1999, when István Csurka, leader of quasi-opposition parliamentary party, MIÉP, expressed his opinion on border revision with Yugoslavia and joining a part of Vojvodina to Hungary, the opposition parties angrily rejected the idea, while the government indicated only, "...that such an option was not on

¹⁷⁸ Opposition parties, namely the MSZP and SZDSZ opposed extending the government rights to allow foreign military to enter/station in Hungary's territory. The opposition condemned the government for cutting back oversight and decisive role of Parliament, while the government was willing to extend its rights on use of the military.

¹⁷⁹ "Ne induljanak bombázók Magyarországról," Népszabadság Online, (Budapest: 4 May 1999).

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

government's agenda *now*.”¹⁸¹ Interestingly enough, on 10 May 1999, when Zsolt Lányi (FKGP), chairman of the Parliamentary Defense Committee, proposed the idea of independent state status for Vojvodina,¹⁸² the prime minister backed off, stating, “This is only Mr. Lányi's personal opinion.”¹⁸³ The prime minister did not pay any attention to this particular detail, which Mr. Lányi had expressed as a chairperson of a parliamentary committee and as a member of a coalition party.

As far as military capabilities are concerned, Hungary did not participated with military means in the Kosovo War. Since NATO mostly used its overwhelming air might, the Hungarian air force, due to its deficient control and communication capability could not participate in direct action. Moreover, the government indicated, “By the parliamentary resolution, the Hungarian military will not participate in military action in Kosovo, nor will a Hungarian soldier leave the territory of Hungary.”¹⁸⁴ In addition, the possibilities of the Hungarian Air Force to join the war were reduced as well. Despite the functioning Air Sovereignty Operation Center in Veszprém, on 9 April 1999, NATO air-traffic control took over half of the Hungarian airspace, closing it between 4,500 and 12,000 meters (see Fig. V.B.1) for flights. Although Hungarian aircrafts were mounted with NATO Identification of Friend or Foe (IFF) equipment, they were usable only in a peace-time mission. Until the beginning of the air campaign Hungary had not acquired the so-called “war code” for IFF, without which Hungarian aircrafts could be identified only as enemy airplanes on NATO air control screen. Hungarian MiG-29s could only fly

¹⁸¹ “Pártok megosztottsága,” Népszabadság Online, (Budapest: 29 April 1999).

¹⁸² “A Vajdaság legyen önálló állam,” Népszabadság Online, (Budapest: 11 May 1999).

¹⁸³ “Kormány elhatárolódás,” Népszabadság Online, (Budapest: 12 May 1999).

¹⁸⁴ “A NATO használhatja a magyar reptereket,” Népszabadság Online, (Budapest: 25 March 1999).

within the boundary of Hungary with prior permission of the NATO air control center, located in Vincenza, Italy.¹⁸⁵

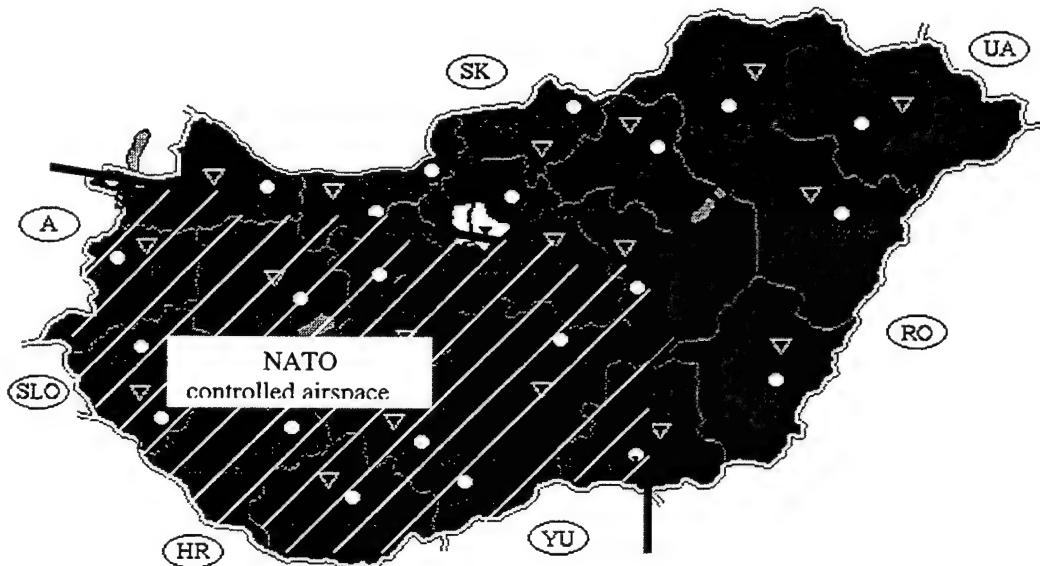


Figure V.B.1.¹⁸⁶ NATO Controlled Airspace in Hungary During the Kosovo War

Regardless of support of the parliamentary parties, the government was concerned about public reaction to war in Kosovo. Nevertheless, a public opinion poll, conducted on 11-12 April 1999, showed the majority of the public supported the air campaign, but expressed doubt of its outcome. At the beginning of the air strikes 23 percent of the population thought that the aim of the war was to stop ethnic-cleaning and help minorities, while on the date of the poll this number increased to 48 percent. About two-third of those questioned supported the idea of helping refugees regardless of their national origin, and about half said they would accommodate refugees in their homes.

¹⁸⁵ "Hiányzott a háborús kód," Népszabadság Online, (Budapest: 25 June 1999).

¹⁸⁶ "A NATO felügyeli a légtérét," Népszabadság Online, (Budapest: 9 April 1999).

However, half of those questioned would only accommodate refugees, if “somebody else paid the bill”. The number of NATO supporters increased as well with 57 percent supporting NATO membership in March 1999. By April this number increased to 66 percent. According to the poll 60 percent of the population believed that if an armed attack occurred against Hungary, NATO would help.¹⁸⁷

The lessons learned from the Kosovo War forced the Hungarian government to seek a more consolidated decision-making process and to accelerate the implementation of force modernization, which was envisioned in the Basic Security Principles adopted in late 1998.

C. THE EFFECT OF DOMESTIC POLITICS ON CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS AFTER KOSOVO

After the Kosovo War the government initiated a so-called strategic defense review. The review envisioned a ten-year long, three-phase defense reform, which would include steps of restructuring the armed forces, simplifying the command and control strata, modernizing training and military technology, and improving work and living conditions of military personnel.¹⁸⁸ Even though each involved party agreed to the necessity of the reforms, these programs did not happen without problems.

Back in February 1999, István Gyarmati, Deputy State Secretary for Defense Policy, was relieved from his position, allegedly because he falsified the Defense Planning Questionary (DPQ), sent to Brussels, and promised non-existing Hungarian

¹⁸⁷ “Opinion Poll,” Median Közvélemény –és Piackutató Intézet, (10-11 April, 1999). The poll was conducted among 1000 adults, representing the Hungarian adult population.

¹⁸⁸ www.honvedelem.hu/cikk.php?cikk=275.

military capabilities to NATO.¹⁸⁹ To replace Mr. Gyarmaty, minister of defense appointed LtG. Lajos Fodor as Deputy State Secretary. This step was controversial though, because it contradicted the government's intention of enhancing civilian control. Although, LtG. Fodor would act as a civilian in his new position, he previously occupied position of Deputy Chief of Defense Staff. Therefore despite his good intentions, his impartiality would be questioned.

In the defense review, another clashing point was Mr. Wachsler's, administrative state secretary, proposal concerning the relation between the Commander of the Hungarian Army/Chief of Staff and civilian leadership of the ministry of defense. In Mr. Wachsler view, in the integrated ministry of defense the Commander of the Hungarian Army/Chief of Staff would be under his chain of command.¹⁹⁰ The basis of the confrontation was the traditional question, "Who commands whom?" In Hungary the Chief of Staff still had a right to give orders, which was in conflict with NATO practice, according to Mr. Wachsler.¹⁹¹ As expected, Gen. Végh, Commander of the Army, opposed the notion, which, in fact restricted his authority and responsibility. Moreover, Gen. Végh worked out his concept of the integration, in which he proposed the position of the Chief of Staff and Administrative State Secretary to be equal in terms of authority and responsibility. Gen. Végh sent the idea directly to the President (Commander in Chief), his superior by the Constitution. However, Dr. Szabó, Defense Minister, and Mr. Wachsler clearly felt that Gen. Végh violated their chain of command.¹⁹² The prime minister backed up his minister, supporting a more centralized idea of integration and

¹⁸⁹ "Menesztek Gyarmatit," HVG, 1999/6, (Budapest: 13 February 1999), p. 19.

¹⁹⁰ "Csillagosok Háborúja," HVG, 2000/6, (Budapest: 9 September 2000), pp. 89-93.

¹⁹¹ "Tamás Wachsler interview," HVG, 1999/7, (Budapest: 20 February 1999), p. 112.

¹⁹² www.nepszabadsag.hu/Archiv/Doc.asp?AID=54838&CID=10&IID=1195&SID=1.

saying, “The Commander’s overreaching authority prevents exercising civilian control.”¹⁹³ Thus, Gen. Végh, sensing loss of political support, submitted his resignation on 9 July 1999.¹⁹⁴

By nomination of the minister, the president appointed LtG. Lajos Fodor, who, just half a year ago, was appointed to the position of Deputy State Secretary for Defense Policy, as Commander of the Hungarian Army/Chief of Staff on 1 August 1999.¹⁹⁵ The appointment of LtG. Fodor met full support of all parliamentary parties in the Parliament Defense Committee, where Gen. Fodor said “I will put all my effort to programs, envisioned in the Strategic Defense Review, to succeed, in improving the living and work conditions in the military. I accept the superiority of politics, where the Commander gets his orders from the minister, who represents the government’s policy.”¹⁹⁶

Implementation of the defense reform, however, was halted for the rest of 1999, due to the different interpretation of the Constitution by parliamentary parties. The defense reform concept, particularly the part on the use of force and sending Hungarian troops abroad, required amendment to the Constitution. The Socialist Party sustained its position, according, which only the Parliament is entitled, with an aggravated majority vote, permitting the participation of Hungarian troops in peacekeeping, peace-building mission. At the same time the proposition would grant rights to the government to decide and permit movement of troops in connection with NATO/PfP exercises.¹⁹⁷ The Parliamentary Defense Committee chairman, Mr. Lányi half-opposed and half-supported

¹⁹³ www.nepszabadsag.hu/Archiv/Doc.asp?AID=55888&CID=10&IID=1208&SID=1. On the contrary, the prime minister removed his support after Gen. Végh resignation, supporting the notion to place the Chief of Staff directly under the control of the defense minister. This eventually led to Mr. Wachsler resignation on 14 September 2000. (see: HVG, 2000/36, Budapest: 9 September 2000, pp. 89-93).

¹⁹⁴ www.nepszabadsag.hu/Archiv/Doc.asp?AID=56484&CID=10&IID=1215&SID=1.

¹⁹⁵ www.nepszabadsag.hu/Archiv/Doc.asp?AID=58062&CID=10&IID=1234&SID=1.

¹⁹⁶ www.nepszabadsag.hu/Archiv/Doc.asp?AID=57921&CID=10&IID=1232&SID=1.

¹⁹⁷ “Juhász és Lányi a csapatmozgásokról,” *Népszabadság*, (Budapest: 10 July, 1999).

the Socialist's idea saying, "It is my opinion that the Parliament should decide on participation in peacekeeping missions, not with aggravated but simple majority vote."¹⁹⁸

Meanwhile, despite a standoff between the coalition and opposition parties, in October 1999 the prime minister's office worked out a proposal, aimed at creating more centralized Defense Forces. According to plans, small bases, military storages in remote places would close. The Hungarian Defense Forces would get rid of institutions, which were not in accordance with basic tasks of the military. Such institutions are military health and recreational facilities, cultural institutions and the National Defense University.¹⁹⁹ Yet, since these plans affect the manning level of the military, their implementation requires National Assembly's majority approval, which was, due to the chilly relations between governing and opposition parties, unlikely.

The rhetoric used by parties did not help to ease the tension between the opposition, MSZP, and the governing FIDESZ-MPP. FIDESZ speakers often accused the MSZP of causing more harm to Hungary's economy, military and social affairs, than "natural disasters". On the other hand the MSZP charged the coalition government with splitting up the society, creating cliques, and unaccountable spending of money without public accountability.

To comply with the government proposal, by March 2000, Dr. Szabó, Defense Minister and Mr. Wachsler, Administrative State Secretary worked out a new defense reform concept, which included the closure of 73 military bases, reduction of about 20,000 personnel, and the integration the MOD and the Defense Staff.²⁰⁰ After amending the Defense Law, the concept envisioned, "...abolishment of the position of Commander

¹⁹⁸ "Juhász és Lányi a csapatmozgásokról," Népszabadság, (Budapest: 10 July, 1999).

¹⁹⁹ www.nepszabadsag.hu/Archiv/Doc.asp?AID=63555&CID=10&IID=1297&SID=1.

²⁰⁰ "Haderőreform-kérdőjelek," HVG, 2000/10, (Budapest: 11 March 2000), pp. 107-109.

of the Hungarian Army, delegating the Commander's rights to the minister of defense; however, the minister of defense could delegate organizational rights and responsibilities, requiring professional-military capabilities, to the Chief of Staff.”²⁰¹ Yet, to amend the Defense Law would require opposition support in the Parliament, which due to new clashes caused by the election of the media's board of trustees, was unlikely.²⁰²

The government, to break the deadlock, implemented a new public relation's (PR) strategy. First, Prime Minister Orbán announced that he would personally supervise the defense reform,²⁰³ which was a move itself to evaluate defense matters in the eyes of the public. Secondly, the Prime Minister appointed Béla Király, a former general in the 1956 upheaval, as a personal adviser in implementing defense reform.²⁰⁴ Thirdly, the prime minister appealed to the opposition parties by stating that national defense was a matter of extraordinary importance, therefore, it needed consensus of the parties. Since opposition parties based their tactics on national interest, any further objection to cooperation in defense matters would question their real devotion to national defense, force modernization and, eventually, to NATO, and, as a consequence, would lead to loss of public support.

The new PR turned out to be success. In March 2000, after four rounds of negotiations of the six parliamentary parties, a pre-agreement was reached about the steps of the defense reform.²⁰⁵ The pre-agreement reached during negotiations continued in the

²⁰¹ “Haderőreform-kérdőjelek,” HVG, 2000/10, (Budapest: 11 March 2000), pp. 107-109.

²⁰² *Ibid.*

²⁰³ “Honvédség és nyilvánosság,” HVG, 2000/17, (Budapest: 29 April, 2000), p. 58.

²⁰⁴ “Haderőreform-kérdőjelek,” HVG, 2000/10, (Budapest: 11 March 2000), pp. 107-109. Appointment of Mr. Király may be seen as a continuation of 1956 liberal ideas in the government policy, moreover, Mr. Király has been a devoted proponent of the defense reform, integrated ministry of defense and civilian control since 1990. (see also: Király, Béla, “Military Reform: What Should Be Done,” Népszabadság, 13 April, 1991).

²⁰⁵ “Határti megegyezés a haderőreformról,” Népszabadság, (Budapest: 19 March 2000).

Parliamentary session on 21 June 2000, where the National Assembly adopted a resolution on “The principles of the reorganization of the Hungarian Defense Forces”.²⁰⁶

The resolution stipulates that the reorganization

...should cover all aspect of the military, including the structure of the Defense Forces, command and control strata, system of readiness, mobilization and training, military technology modernization, defense planning and spending, ratio of personnel, work and living condition of personnel, social and other benefits, public relation of the Hungarian Defense Forces and human resource management.²⁰⁷

The resolution states, “Command and control of the Hungarian Defense Forces should be accomplished by integration of the Defense Staff into the Ministry of Defense by the end of 2000.”²⁰⁸ Six-party consensus gave the government a quasi-free hand in the implementation of the defense reform, which hoped to expediate the decision-making process. By the resolution, the National Assembly “Authorizes the government, in implementation of the 61/2000 Resolution, to work out detailed programs and plans, including a concept for dealing with the consequences of personnel reduction, and, after conciliation with the parliamentary Defense Committee, to give out directives on implementation.”²⁰⁹

²⁰⁶ 61/2000 OGY Határozat, (Budapest: 21 June 2000).

²⁰⁷ 61/2000 OGY Határozat, Article 2, (Budapest: 21 June 2000).

²⁰⁸ 61/2000 OGY Határozat, Articles 5 (d) and 6, (Budapest: 21 June 2000). Controversial governmental's steps in personnel changes and military technology procurement caused the MSZP's support withdrawal. Dispute between the Chief of the Defense Staff and Administrative State Secretary regarding authority and responsibility of the Chief of Defense Staff also slowed down implementation of defense reform.

²⁰⁹ 61/2000 OGY Határozat, Article 9, (Budapest: 21 June 2000).

D. CONTROVERSIES IN DEFENSE REFORM

The Resolution, which was based on Mr. Wachsler's, the Administrative State Secretary, Defense Concept had immediate personnel and economic consequences. The Resolution brought bad luck to its "father", because contrary to Mr. Wachsler's plans the National Assembly put the position of the Chief of Staff at an equal level with the Administrative Secretary.²¹⁰ Unsuccessful in his plans to direct the Ministry of Defense, Mr. Wachsler resigned on 15 September 2000.²¹¹ For some opposition observers, Mr. Wachsler presence in the MOD served only to enhance the economic (monetary) condition of the governing parties, since his plans made the Army's 800 billions real-estate assets become property of the State Privatization Company (ÁPV Rt.), which was run by the government.²¹²

After resignation of Mr. Wachsler, the minister of defense appointed Col. Tamás Perényi, previously Head of the Infrastructure Department of MOD, as Administrative State Secretary of MOD on 1 October 2000.²¹³ Next, after a heated debate over the appointment of generals, on 1 December 2000 the minister of defense replaced Prof. János Szabó with MG. Tivadar Farkas (ret.) in the position of Deputy State Secretary for Human Affairs.²¹⁴

²¹⁰ „Konszenzus az integráció ügyében,” Magyar Nemzet, 12 October 2000.

²¹¹ HVG, 2000/36, (Budapest: 9 September 2000), p. 89-93.

²¹² www.nepszabadsag.hu/Archiv/Doc.asp?AID=92375&CID=30&ID=1583&SID=1. Those 73 military bases, which were to be closed, go under the authority of State Privatization Company, and are subject to further privatization. Though money from privatization goes to the overall state budget, their allocation also is subjects to government decision.

²¹³ Magyar Hírlap Online, (Budapest: 22 November 2000).

²¹⁴ HVG, 2000/48, (Budapest: 2 December 2000), pp. 7-10. At the end of November 2000, appointment of MG. Farkas and the previous appointment of Col. Perényi, resulted in only two positions below the minister: the Political State Secretary and the Deputy State Secretary for Defense Policy remaining as civilian, questions effectiveness of the civilian control (see: Appendix V.D.1). Furthermore, by the

Authorized by the 61/2000 National Assembly Resolution, in August 2000, the Defense minister began to plan the reorganization of the higher echelon of the Hungarian Armed Forces, which included repositioning assignments of generals. Agreeing with the Chief of Staff, the defense minister submitted his list of proposals in September 2000 to the Commander in Chief, the President, for approval, but the Prime Minister killed the nomination list, saying: "...it needs to be revised because what we need is a young, loyal to the Defense Forces and NATO oriented general corps."²¹⁵ By this move the Prime Minister clearly violated his constitutional rights, since according to the Defense Law and the Constitution "The president appoints generals by the nomination of the minister of defense."²¹⁶ The Prime Minister's disagreement caused an "ex lex" situation lasting until the end of October 2000. The basis of the "ex lex" situation was that generals, who accepted the new positions, were relieved from previous assignments, but the Prime Minister's intervention prevented their assignment from taking place. The Prime Minister defended his position saying, "Since Hungary is a parliamentary democracy where all responsibility for government action lays with the Prime Minister, I personally think it is my responsibility to re-examine generals' appointments."²¹⁷

Besides the appointment of the generals the government and MOD's leadership continued to "slenderize" the armed forces. The MOD proposed the closure of 73 military bases, among those Pápa Airfield and the Danube Flotilla by the end of 2002.²¹⁸

²¹⁵ proposition of Col. Perenyi, the defense minister replaced Mr. Martinusz in the position of Deputy State Secretary for Defense Policy with MG. József Bali on 1 March 2001. (see: "Katonai vezetőváltás," Magyar Nemzet, Budapest: 21 February 2001).

²¹⁶ "Orbán Viktor a csapatparancsnoki kinevezéseket is ellenőrizte," Magyar Hírlap, (Budapest: 26 October 2000).

²¹⁷ 1993/CX 7.§ (1) Law on National Defense, (Budapest: 27 December 1993). See also: Constitution of the Republic of Hungary, Article III, 30/A §. (1) i.

²¹⁸ www.nepszabadsag.hu/Archiv/Doc.asp?AID=95135&CID=10&IID=1610&SID=1.

²¹⁹ HVG, 2000/10, (Budapest: 11 March 2000), pp. 107-109.

Interestingly enough, not only the members of the opposition parties, but also governing parties questioned the reality and effectiveness of these base closures. László Kövér, the governing party's president questioned the defense minister in the Parliament on 31 August 2000, "Why does the Chief of Staff hinder defense reform."²¹⁹ Mr. Kövér was referring to Pápa Airfield soon after Gen. Fodor, Chief of Staff announced the government's decision. Mr. Kövér apparently was unaware of the government's decision; moreover, his interpellation was based on his local-patriotism, since he is a parliamentary delegate of Pápa. The same story happened to the Danube Flotilla, only this time the opponent was Mr. Lányi, chairman of the Parliamentary Defense Committee, who, on the same 31 August, questioned his fellow party-member, the defense minister, about the economic rationality of the Flotilla closure.²²⁰ Of coincidence, Mr. Lányi had been elected to the Parliament from Újpest district of Budapest, where the Flotilla was located.

Besides the obvious politically motivated lobbying, the mayors of the settlements, where bases scheduled for closure were located, also began to lobby for tangible economic reasons. Any base closure directly affects the environment of the military. It is likely that an indefinite number of professional soldiers will not accept assignment to a new location, causing unemployment in specific regions. Additionally, with base closure, habits of consumers may also change, affecting the regions', cities', villages' budget due to changing tax, and discharged personnel may become destitute, which, in terms, may cause societal conflicts.²²¹ Prof. János Szabó, Deputy State Secretary for Human Affairs warned, "If politicians did not devote resources for keeping personnel in the military corps or compensate those of discharged, the ministry of defense would face an

²¹⁹ HVG, 2000/36, (Budapest: 9 September 2000), pp. 89-93.

²²⁰ HVG, 2000/36, (Budapest: 9 September 2000), pp. 89-93.

²²¹ Deák, Péter, "A katona is civil," Magyar Hírlap, (Budapest: 12 September 2000).

embarrassing surprise.”²²² He meant, and the Military Trade Union affirmed that, more personnel would leave the military than the ministry planned. Non-commissioned officers, particularly, indicated they would not accept a new assignment and would leave the armed forces, pushing the personnel ratio in an unwanted direction.²²³

The development of military technology, particularly air force modernization caused broad political debate. Considering the 61/2000 National Assembly Resolution, but without the Prime Minister consent, the defense minister signed a letter of intend with the German DASA/Russian MAPO consortium on refurbishing 14 Hungarian MiG-29 for 20 billion Hungarian forints (HUF), to comply with NATO standards.²²⁴ Immediately after the letter’s existence became known, Peter Tufo, the US Ambassador to Hungary, stressed that refurbishment of MiGs was a waste of money and advocated the Hungarian government to buy used F-16s from the US.²²⁵ Government speakers supported Western aircraft, stating that the MiGs could not effectively be refurbished; moreover, it was essential to get rid of dependency on Russian military technology. Opposition leaders indicated that Hungarian economy was not in a condition to spend 160 billion on force modernization.²²⁶ Force modernization affects the structure of the defense forces, since

²²² “Tömegesen hagyják el a hadsereget,” Magyar Hírlap, 19 October 2000.

²²³ Deák Péter, “A katona is civil,” Magyar Hírlap, (Budapest: 12 September 2000).

²²⁴ HVG, 2000/36, (Budapest, 9 September 2000), pp. 89-93.

²²⁵ Ibid. The decision of aircraft procurement was made on 8 February 2001 by the National Security Cabinet. The Cabinet decided not to proceed with MiGs refurbishment. The German DASA will carry out only life extending maintenance on 14 MiGs. After 2003 the Hungarian Air Force will lease 24 F-16s, which are now in storage at Nellis AFB, Nevada. The lease agreement worth 160 billion HUF, which includes deconservation, mid-life maintenance, rearmament of aircraft; infrastructure and initial pilots’ training. (see: “Búcsú a MIG-29-estől,” Népszabadság, Budapest: 9 February 2001).

²²⁶ www.nepszabadsag.hu/Archiv/Doc.asp?AID=94763&CID=10&IID=1606&SID=1. The government’s decision on F-16 is ambiguous in terms of budgetary foresight. Since the decision for F-16s was made after the two-year state budget for 2001-2002 had been passed, there was no mention for aircrafts. (see: 2000/CXXXIII Law on the State Budget of the Republic of Hungary for 2001-2002, Budapest, 19 December 2000). Moreover, in Spring 2002 there will be parliamentary elections in Hungary, therefore Mr. Ferenc Juhász (MSZP), Deputy Chairman of the Defense Committee accused the government of

the operation of more complicated military technology requires more skilled personnel. One way to achieve more skilled personnel was the proposition of converting the Armed Forces to a voluntary army, envisioned in the 61/2000 National Assembly Resolution.²²⁷

However, there has been a significant difference between the parliamentary parties on the implementation of an all-voluntary army. The SZDSZ, an opposition party advocates the abolishment of conscription by 2002.²²⁸ Governing parties reminded Imre Mécs, the strongest proponent of an all-volunteer army, what he said in 1994, "Whenever the conscription is inconvenient, it means a kind of civilian control of the army."²²⁹ The MSZP, the other opposition party thinks that because of budgetary constrain an all-voluntary force can be implemented within 6-8 years. By the estimate of MSZP's experts, immediate conversion would require much more budgetary fund, than is available.²³⁰ In the period of NATO membership, initiated base closure, force reorganization and force reduction, however, the government cannot avoid dealing with such an issue, which directly affects almost all Hungarian families. In the opinion of the coalition parties, the creation of an all-volunteer army can be accomplished in an 8-12 year time-period. In the MOD's defense concept, however, there is only a provision to reduce conscript time from 9 months to 6 months by 2002.²³¹

after the two-year state budget for 2001-2002 had been passed, there was no mention for aircrafts. (see: 2000/CXXXIII Law on the State Budget of the Republic of Hungary for 2001-2002, Budapest, 19 December 2000). Moreover, in Spring 2002 there will be parliamentary elections in Hungary, therefore Mr. Ferenc Juhász (MSZP), Deputy Chairman of the Defense Committee accused the government of making financial commitment without consulting the Parliamentary Defense Committee. (see: www.nepszabadsag.hu/Archiv/Toc.asp?IID=1725&SID=1).

²²⁷ 61/2000 OGY Határozat, Article 7 (f), (Budapest, 21 June 2000).

²²⁸ "Vita a sorkötelezettség eltörléséről," HVG, 2000/13, (Budapest: 1 April 2000), pp. 103-107.

²²⁹ Protocol of the April 1994 Session of the Legue of the Opponents of Conscription.

²³⁰ "Vita a sorkötelezettség eltörléséről," HVG, 2000/13, (Budapest: 1 April 2000), pp. 103-107.

²³¹ "Viták a hadseregről," HVG, 2000/12, (Budapest: 25 March 2000), p. 13.

VI. CONCLUSION

In summary, Hungary has come a long way since 1989. The October 1989 Constitution and the 1 December 1989 Defense Reform Concept provided a base for a legal framework to reform civil-military relations. The December 1993 Defense Act²³² reassured the Parliament's decisive role in defense matters stating that the Parliament plays a primary role in defining the priorities of defense policy. The National Assembly decides the defense budget, the manning level of the armed forces, the balance between services and the main direction of the development of military technology. The Act made the armed forces directly subordinate to the MOD, which has administrative responsibilities over the armed forces, and, at the same time, it strengthened the constitutional position of the President, as Commander-in-Chief, in the event of emergency.

The Parliament, though, and particularly the Parliamentary Defense Committee, could have been more effective. Its limitation was seen in Mr. Keleti's 1995 unilateral action to buy T-72 tanks from Belarus, and in 1996, in the participation of MiG-29s in PfP exercise in Poland without proper consultation and Parliamentary permission. More recently, in 2000 the Defense Committee was not involved in the decision about the air force modernization process; however, it imposed a burden on the defense budget. Although the 61/2000 National Assembly Resolution has made clear objectives for defense reform, Hungary needs more tangible cooperation between the government, the Parliament and the integrating Ministry of Defense for the process to be success.

²³² "Az 1993. évi CX törvény a honvédelemről," Magyar Közlöny, No. 186, (Budapest: 24 December, 1993), 4. §, 5. §, 9. §, 10. §, 11. §, 199. § (2).

The 1993/CX Defense Act and the 61/2000 National Assembly Resolution defined a long-term defense reform, which includes steps for restructuring the armed forces, simplifying the command and control strata, modernizing of training and military technology, and improving of work and living conditions of military personnel²³³ for the period of 2000-2010. What Hungary needs to do to implement this important reform is to overcome the domestic political standoff caused by different interpretations of the Constitution on the use and deployment of the armed forces.

The integrated Ministry of Defense eliminates duplications caused by conflicting tasks of both the Ministry of Defense and the Defense Staff. Defense minister's involvement into the direct command structure facilitates the flow of defense needs from the armed forces to the government, and by doing so it exposes defense policy and its activities to public scrutiny and accountability, making it more efficient and providing a more effective oversight of the Hungarian Defense Forces.

When the Hungarian government, during the period of 1994-1998, realized that Hungarian membership in NATO required more than words and devoted itself to increase the previously “tiny” defense budget, the new government, taking power in 1998 also realized the need for a more comprehensive defense reform. As a direct consequence of the Kosovo War the government had to expedite the reforms. The direct involvement of the government and personally the prime minister, into the direction, supervision and the implementation of the defense reform elevated the importance of national defense.

The Strategic Defense Review creates a solid background for achieving a smaller, better trained, equipped and sustainable, by the domestic economy defense, forces, capable of carrying out tasks set forth in the amended Defense Act, “...meet military

²³³ www.honvedelem.hu/cikk.php?cikk=275.

obligations originated in international treaties, especially with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, the United Nation and the Organization of Security Cooperation in Europe.”²³⁴

At the end of the first step of the defense reform, by 2003, the Hungarian Defense Forces will reach their peace-manning level of 39,000. Most of the devoted defense budget goes to the improvement of living and work conditions, and the reconstruction of remaining military installations. Resource savings from the reduced manning level and the privatization of closed bases goes for programs created for compensation and the retraining of those discharged.

In the second phase between 2003-2006, while the MOD is continuing to implement “life-style enhancing” programs, the Defense Forces goes on the increment of the readiness and training level in order to create a capability based armed forces, complying to NATO requirements. During the same period of time, the conscript level of the army is decreasing, while a number of contract soldier increases, creating a base for an all-voluntary armed forces.

In the period of 2007-2010, the military and the government will focus on force modernization. About one-third of the defense budget will go to procurement of new military technology. Defense forces continue to convert into an all-voluntary army and to create a healthy ratio of commissioned and non commissioned officers of one to two.

Since political and public support for sustaining a capable army exists, there is no doubt that the army is eventually converting to one that governments of the period of 1990-2000 envisioned. Then, critiques, such as István Gyarmati, former Deputy State Secretary for Defense Policy, who said, “We [in the ministry of defense] do not know

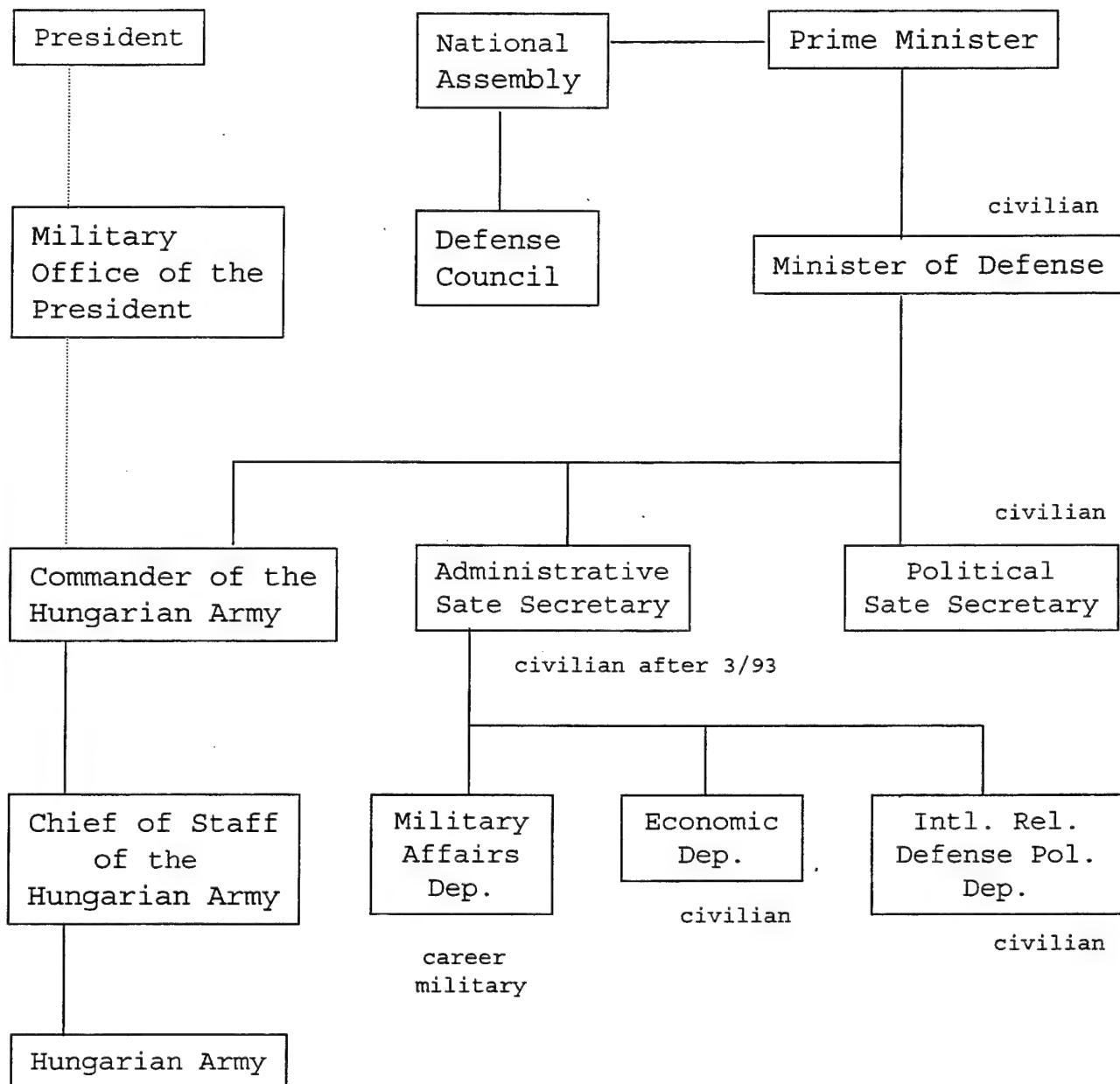
²³⁴ 1998/LXXXIX Law, Article I, 5.§ (1) (e), (Budapest: 22 December 1998).

what to do with the army because the political elite has never decided what it needs the army for.”²³⁵ or Jeffrey Simon, who doubted that “Budapest will actually contribute to common defense efforts and, therefore, as a result of insufficient defense resources will only be a free-rider in NATO”²³⁶, will be outdated.

²³⁵ “Kritika a haderőreformnak,” Magyar Hírlap, (Budapest: 21 November 2000).

²³⁶ “A magyar NATO tagság,” HVG, 1999/10, (Budapest: 13 March 1999), pp. 7-10.

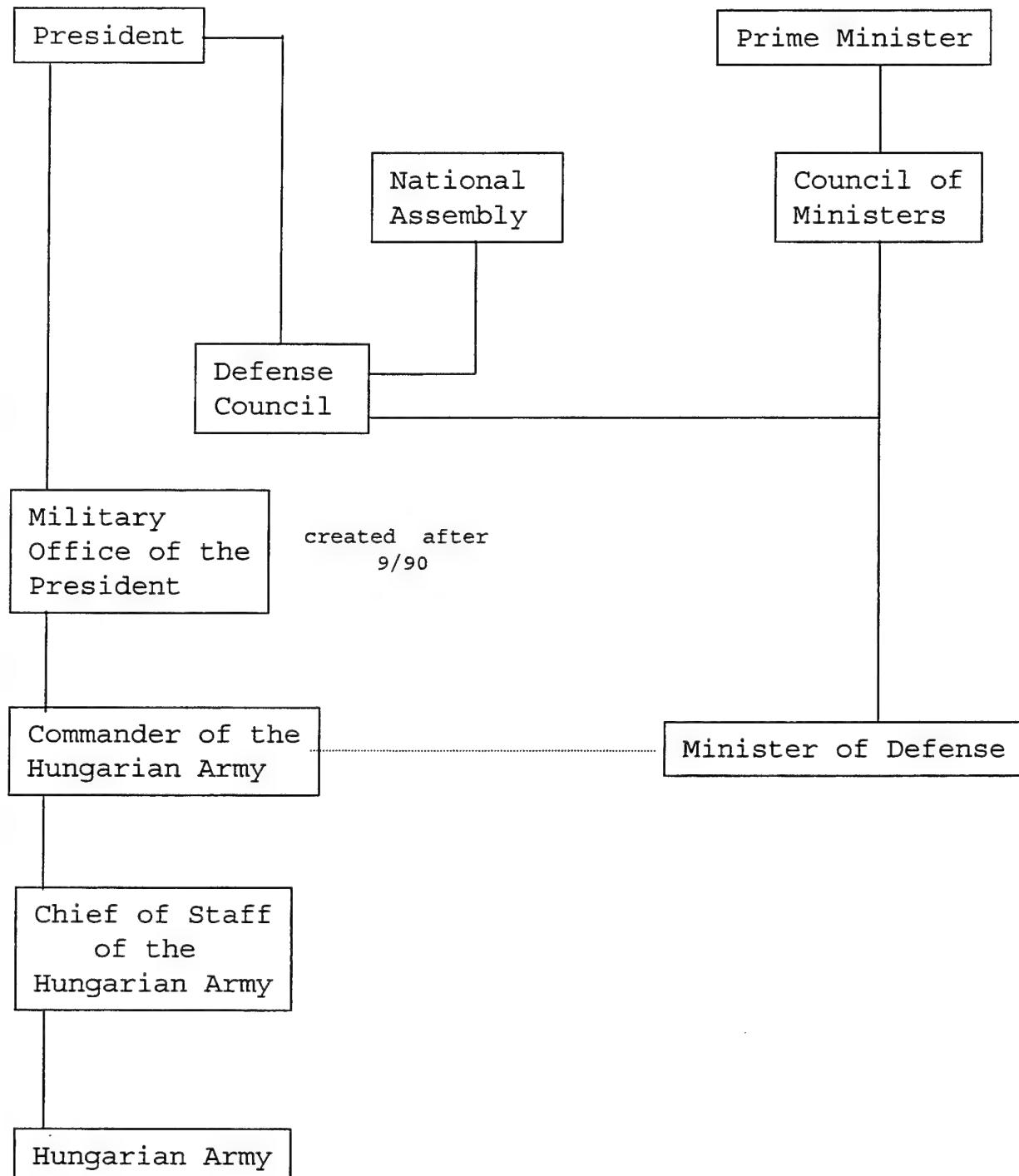
Defense reform in Hungary, 1992



Appendix III.B.1.

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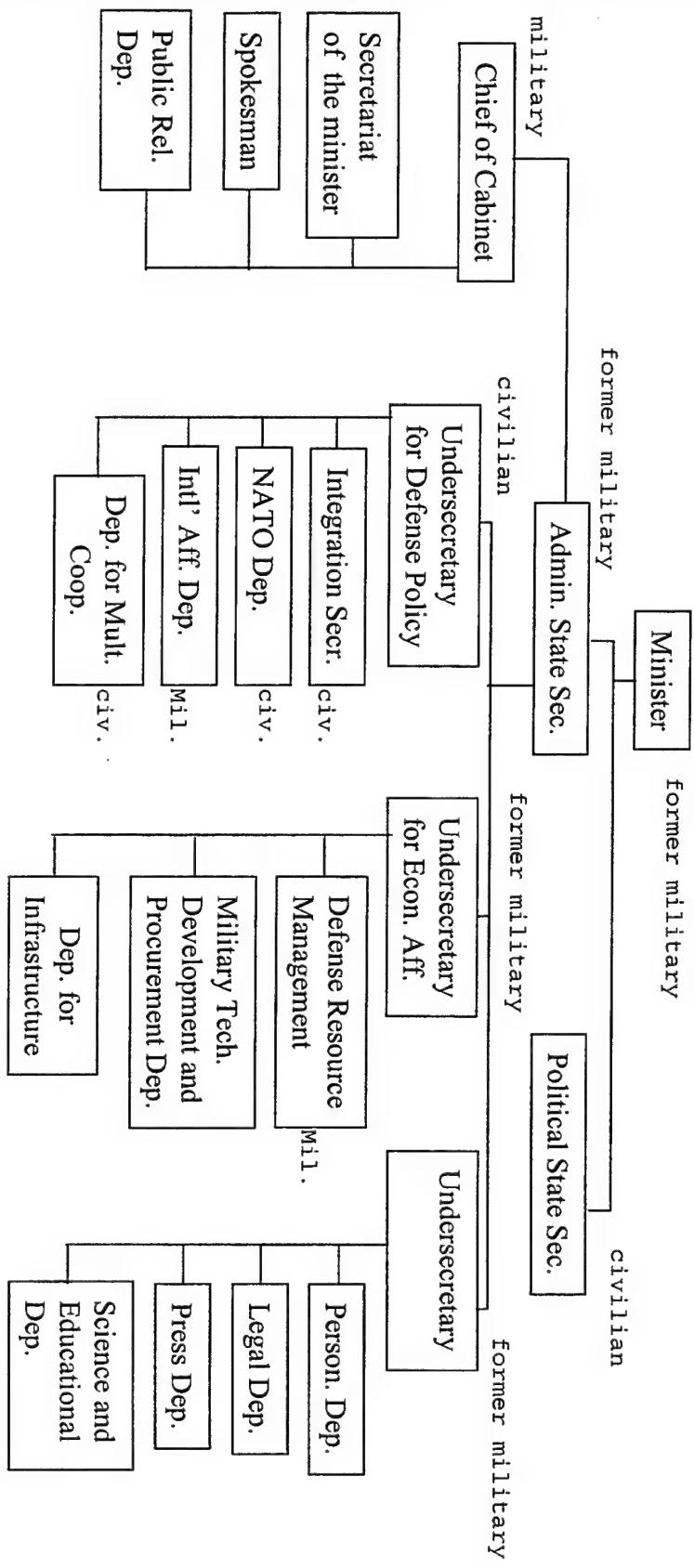
Defense Reform in Hungary, 1989-1990



Appendix III.A.1.

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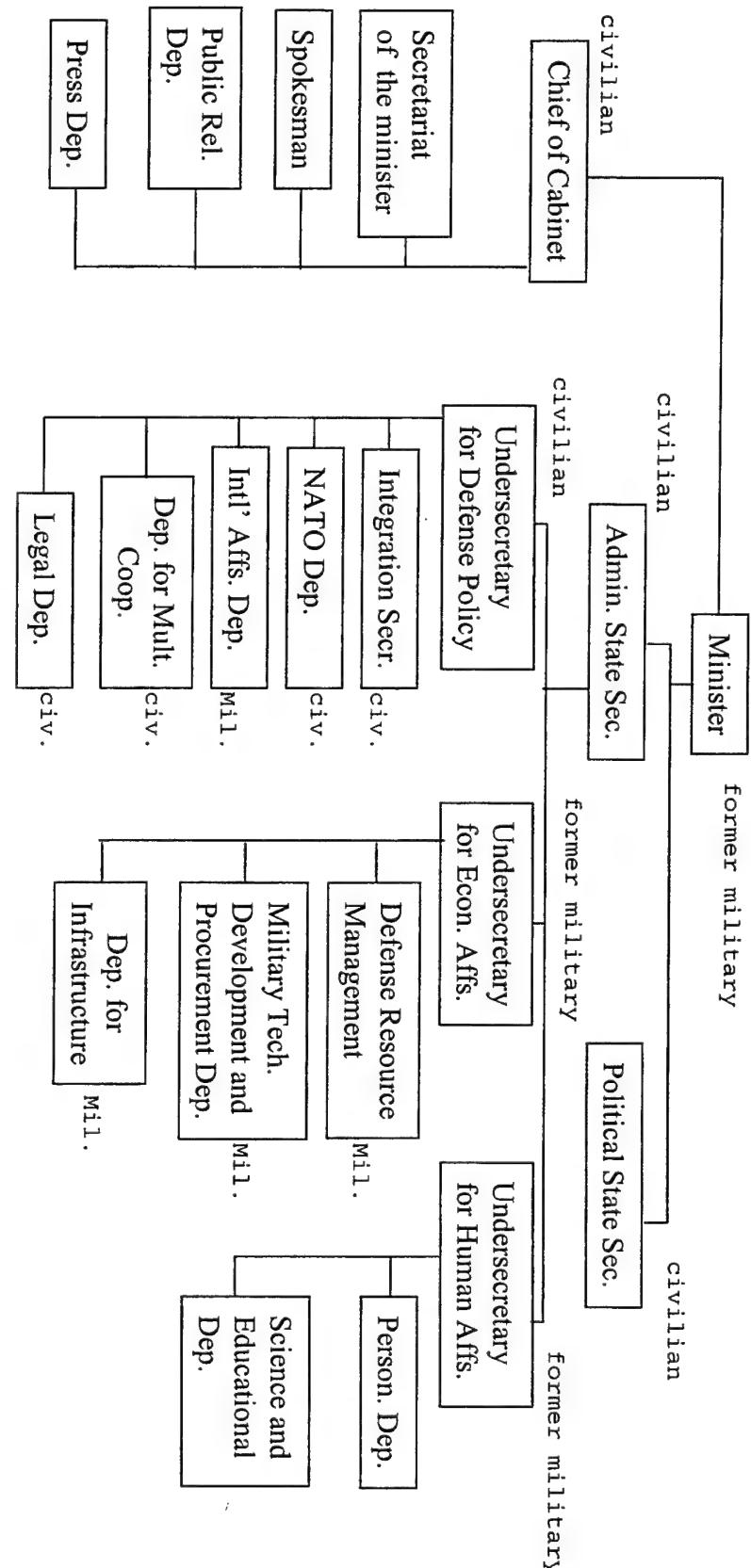
Structure of the Hungary's MOD, 1994 - 1995



Appendix IV.A.1.

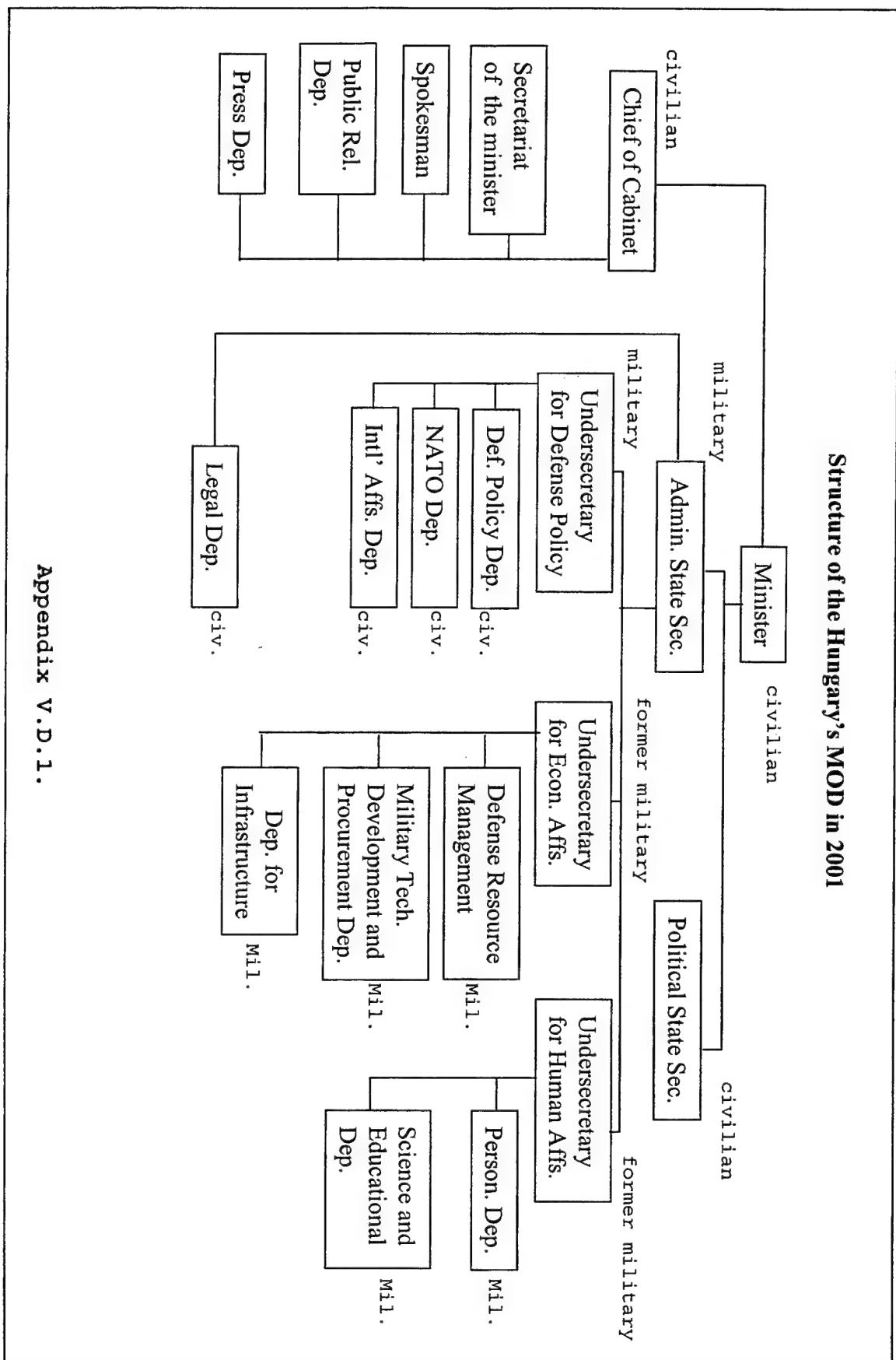
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Structure of the Hungary's MOD in 1998



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Structure of the Hungary's MOD in 2001



Appendix V.D.1.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CEE	Central and East Europe
CMEA	Council of Mutual Economic Assistance
FIDESZ	Alliance of Young Democrats
FIDESZ-MPP	FIDESZ Hungarian Civic Party
FKGP	Independent Smallholders' Party
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HA	Hungarian Army
HPA	Hungarian People's Army's
HPS	Hungarian Socialist Party
HSWP	Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party
HUF	Hungarian Forint
MDF	Hungarian Democratic Forum
MIÉP	Hungarian Life and Truth Party
MOD	Ministry of Defense
MPD	Main Political Directorate
MSZP	Hungarian Socialist Party
NAC	North Atlantic Council
NACC	North Atlantic Cooperation Council
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
O&M	Operation and Maintenance
PfP	Partnership for Peace
PR	Public Relation

SZDSZ	Alliance of Free Democrats
TFG	Target Force Goals
WEU	Western European Union
WTO	Warsaw Treaty Organization

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